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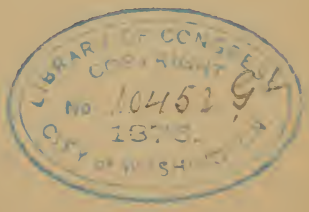
THE TRUE MAN,

AND OTHER

Practical Sermons.

BY

REV. SAMUEL S. MITCHELL, D.D.



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TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE NEW YORK AVENUE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION,

AT WHOSE REQUEST THESE SERMONS ARE PUBLISHED,

AND BY ONE OF WHOM THEY HAVE BEEN SELECTED AND PREPARED FOR THE PRESS,

This Volume is Affectionately Inscribed.

MAY IT PROVE A PLEASANT MEMORY OF DAYS GONE BY;
AND, IF IT PLEASE GOD, DO GOOD
IN THE FUTURE.

S. S. M.

WASHINGTON, D.C., 1876.

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SERMONS.

I.

THE TRUE MAN.

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." — Prov. xxiii. 7.

EVIDENTLY, *the body is not the man.* It may be disgraced, deformed, diminished, and yet the man remain untouched. This physical disfiguration and loss are only the taking down of a house. The wings are first removed, and the occupant is scarcely disturbed. Then the main building is reached. This room is now pillaged, that one now entered by the destroyer. So the process of dissolution goes on, the occupant meanwhile retreating before it, until the finishing blow falls upon the only remaining apartment, and then the indweller, driven forth, must seek another home.

So our bodies die. First, this power decays, then this member fails; elasticity, buoyancy, strength, — these go one after another. First, the keepers of the house tremble, then the grinders cease, because they are few, then these which look out of the windows are darkened; and soon, very soon, the house we live in is so injured, that we must move out of it.

"Not that we would be unclothed," not that we prefer homelessness; but that we may be "clothed upon," may find another and an enduring home.

So men use, so they live in, so they leave, their bodies. See the martyr in the flames holding up his right arm! It is not he which is burning; but that power which is holding up that burning arm (now dropping piecemeal) is he,—this is the man. And soon the body will be so ravaged by the flames, that he can no longer live in it; then he will go out. Bend your ear close to the parched and now stiffening lips. What is the whisper which escapes them? It is the man's last utterance through those lips. When he speaks again, it will be in other way, through other instrument.

Look upon that man by your side. Behold how his selfishness and greed and sensuality are etching themselves into the features of his face. See that other one, how his love and purity and peace are showing themselves in the same features. What is the explanation? Have the eyes, of themselves, any lusts? That pinched mouth, does it so love money? That sodden flesh, in which the dull fire burns, is it so fond of spirits? No: it is the man himself who is doing all this. He is the artificer here. So with many a house in our vast cities. Its vestibule is dirty, its walls are spotted, its blinds swing crazily on their broken hinges. Is the house a drunkard? No; but the owner is. So intimate, so separate, is the man and his body.

Neither are a man's words himself. You cannot

say; "As a man speaketh with his mouth, so is he." Many a man stands silent in the presence of a great wrong, while another blasts it with burning words. What shall we say of the first, — of the silent man? That he has no character; that his moral life is a negation, a nonentity? We know better. We know that he stands silent, because he can endure that which God hates; because he connives at it; because he is making ready to embrace it.

Then, again, words are often used to conceal, to misrepresent, to counterfeit. The pirate on the high seas often runs up a beautiful flag. But this flag is a false one; waving its beauty over black hearts and murderous hands, over blood-stained decks and ill-gotten treasure. So the pirate on human society. He glorifies purity, while he himself is impure. He proclaims the praises of honesty, while he himself is dishonest. In the Church, he cries out, "Lord, Lord," while he does not the things which the Lord commands. In the State, he is loud for reform, while he himself is only for office. "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords."

You well know, my hearers, how easy it is to use words for a blind, for secrecy, for deception. And you also know — even when you endeavor it — how often your words fail to give an exact picture of your true self. Hence it cannot be given as a general rule, that as a man speaketh with his mouth, so is he.

Neither is it possible, universally, to discern the es-

sence of character in action. A man endeavoring to put himself in deeds is like a man running the molten metal into the mould. He knows what he wants to bring forth, but he doesn't always succeed. The image, the casting, often comes out of the mould with a flaw in it, which spoils all. Then there is nothing else to do but to cast it into the furnace again. So we, melting down our sentiments, and our resolutions, and feelings, endeavor to make of them a certain piece of conduct. But when it comes out we see at once that it is not perfect, — not what we intended it should be. Like the Israelites of old, we cast into the furnace of resolution the golden treasure of our hearts, and there comes out a calf. We didn't intend the calf, but there it is. And others looking upon it, say, "There! I knew it: you see how it is; his divine ideal is a calf." But it isn't, and we know it isn't.

What good man is there, who has not again and again, failed to do himself justice in his life? How much of unrealized beauty is there in every artist, which he has never gotten on the canvas! And how much of purity and sweetness and unselfishness is there in many a Christian heart, which the sculpture of action refuses to express! And men look on the statue which we have carved, and say, "What an awkward position! what a stiff and angular arm! what an expressionless face!" And the worst of it is, we know they are right: we know the heart purpose has not justice done it.

Then there are, on the other side, actions which are

more beautiful than the thoughts of the heart. The foul hand lifts up a delicate and perfect crystal from the muddy puddle ; but the mud is beneath. So now and then, out of the depths of a vile and selfish life, the hand of a chance resolution lifts up the beautiful and perfect deed. But the mud, the vileness, the selfishness are in the heart nevertheless.

Such is the path, my hearers, by which, when we have gone far enough, we come to *the true man*, — to the essence of human character. This is found not in physical conditions, found not in words, not in deeds. It is found in the heart. *It is the disposition, it is the heart state, which is the true man.* "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." And if you will consider for a moment, you will see that this test of human character is a perfectly just one ; that it is entirely right that we and all men should be judged in this way.

For consider, that *our life is a progress, is in the direction of the realization of this heart state.* The question, here, is one simply of time, of an unfolding, of progress, of development. There is, no doubt, many a man in the world to-day, whose whole happiness and trust and ambition are in the wealth which he has accumulated. He is now what the Bible terms a rich man, — one who trusts in his money, and with whom covetousness is idolatry. And yet, a few years ago, this man was poor, with nothing of that which he now possesses save the fierce and all-controlling desire of wealth. But had there been any necessity for judging him, in that far-off day of littleness and poverty, it would have been just to have found his

true character, his real self, in this desire. This was what he was before God. For all his life, since that day, has been but the unfolding of this desire, the putting himself into action, the realization of his true life. During these years, he has only been unrolling himself, just as the embryo unrolls, develops, into the finished product. All this time, the man has only been engaged in the work of self-assertion, of that self-assertion which is a fight with, and a victory over, external opposition.

Take a perfectly dry sponge, and any examination will show its true character. No water may be found in it; but, what is more important, its capacity to receive, its hunger for water, — this will be discovered. Now put it in a vessel of water. See how it sucks up the liquid. Behold, how it stores away, in its prepared cells, the coveted article. But it is even no more a sponge now, when it is full of water, than it was before it contained a drop.

So the man of whom we spoke. At first, his nature was the dry sponge, and, all these years, he has been filling himself, — been sucking in the money around him. Such is many a man's life, — one long process of ingurgitation. All the powers of his being are so many channels filled with the desired good, and all flowing inward. Then death comes, and, by destroying the suction force, reverses these currents, compelling effusion. Then the streams flow outward. The broken fountain sends out his fulness in every direction; and the world is the better for the breaking. But, evidently, before the man was full, his true

character was there, — was there in his all-controlling desire, in his felt hunger. The sponge does not change its nature by the filling of itself.

Now, this is still clearer when the human development of a single moment is considered. Take this case. A man, by touching his finger to the trigger of a pistol, makes himself a murderer. But, evidently, the activity of one single finger for a single moment does not make up the essence of murder. It is but the expression of a force already existing. So the charged cloud shoots down its bolt upon the finger of the iron rod; not changing its nature by the act, but only disclosing this nature.

So is it always. *Action is but heart expression.* It is the life force manifesting itself, — framing itself before the eyes of men. It is the opening up of the bud into the flower. All that separates between the heart purpose and its embodiment in open deeds is a period of time. The substance of development is there, the direction of development is fixed, and the actual concrete result, too, exists potentially. Time only is required to bring it into the range of human vision. This is all.

So you see, my hearers, *the heart thought — the heart purpose — is the true man.* All else, the words, the actions, are but the progressive realization, the perfecting expression of this. It is the man interpreting himself to the world; but he himself is there already. He it is who craves, who is compelled to, this interpretation. The fountain is there, and it must flow; the seed is there, and it must grow.

But again: not only is human progress towards the realization of this heart state, *but the separation of the man from this full expression and realization of his inner desire is not a matter of his own choice or creation, and therefore cannot enter, as an element, into his character.*

The field open, covered by the human choice, is only this, *present desire*, and this is all. What you are now in heart, what you desire, — these things you have your say about, these you choose. But about the realization of your desire, as to whether this shall ever be, or when it shall be, — about these things, you do not have your say, you cannot dictate. You have heard it said more than once of this man or that, "It is not his fault that he is not rich." This is true. It is a case of baffling, — of baffling by external force. If the man had his own way, if he had the hand to sculpture his true self out of the world around him, he would be rich. And the truth, here, is capable of a converse expression. It is not the man's virtue that he is not rich. This statement is as true as the other. Poor as the man is in the sight of his fellows, before God, he is rich; that is, one who makes *gain his god.*

So, it is not to the praise of many a one that his impure heart has not broken forth in a black and foul stream of vile action. The occasion has been wanting, external circumstances have hedged him round, God's providence has dammed in the vileness of the heart. It has been in there; it has been the true index and essence of his character for years:

but the external has been such as to prevent its manifestation. It remains as unmanufactured character, as unembodied manhood.

So, it often happens that a man is, to a certain extent, kept under the power of religious truth, who is, in heart, utterly disloyal to the divine law. The restraints of society, the influence of a pious wife, and many other external forces, often contribute to this end. Let these all be removed, and immediately the man would take on an absolutely godless life; that is, would manifest his true self. A wild beast, tethered, is as much a wild beast as if he were loose and his jaws bathed in human blood. The stake which is driven in the ground is not an element of the beast's nature, neither is the strong chain which binds him to it. What would he be, what would he do, if he were loose? These are the questions which bring into view the true nature of the beast.

So, evidently, it is with man. He who comes to Washington, and here throws off all moral restraint, is the same man he was in his own quiet neighborhood: Washington having given him freedom; this is all. So she who goes to Paris, there to forget God's day and God's church. Paris is not the *former* of character here; she is only the *revealer*. She calls forth the heart purpose, which had hitherto been repressed by the hand of custom. She but gives liberty to the woman to be "as she thinketh in her heart." Evidently, my hearers, when the life differs from the heart, the latter, and not the former, must be regarded the true man.

But thirdly: not only is human progress towards the expression of the heart in life, not only is its shortcoming here, that, which may not be set down to the credit of a man; but this is also true, *that, sooner or later, the full coincidence between the external and internal is inevitable; the full expression of the heart is sure to come.*

This may happen at any period of this life. I have known a tree in the orchard, for years propped up, suddenly fall and perfect its ruin! The reason was, that it stood not in its own and all-sufficient strength. So happens it unto men daily in this world. Propped up by family influence, by the custom and habits of their community, by the fear of public opinion, by the absence of opportunity for, or inducement to, evil, the man stands for years; and then, of a sudden, goes down! The explanation is, that what we counted the man, was not the man at all, only an artificial and compound product of the man and society, of the man and his position. So many a coward, in the day of battle, fights like a brave man. Looking on, you would say, he is a brave man. But he is not. What appears as his bravery is an accident of his position. He is in the front rank, well wedged in: there is no chance for him to run. And this impossibility begets the counterfeit likeness of personal bravery which you see.

The chaff is not separated from the wheat until the day of winnowing. So the true man is not shown until his hour comes. The heart-thief is not the hand-thief until his opportunity arrives. This, some-

times, is the largeness of the haul to be made. He who will steal one hundred thousand dollars would not steal one hundred thousand cents. Then, again, it is the supposed impossibility of detection. Then, again, it is pressing need. The man worth a million, walking down the street, is in no danger of stealing a loaf of bread from the window. Why? Because he doesn't want bread, isn't hungry, can easily pay for it. But this, his abstinence alone, doesn't prove him not to be a thief. So is it of all sin and of all crime. It shows itself when its hour comes. Providential circumstances develop it. Combinations, of what to the man are fortuities, act like a bait, and draw it forth, like a lever, and lift it up, like the light, and photograph it.

When shall this hour, this juncture, this crisis, come, do you ask? No one can tell. Only this we can say. It may come at any point in human life And this, secondly, is true, — it must come at death. You know it is difficult often, although standing directly before it, to get a true view of a picture. Cross lights, light from all quarters, intermingle and produce confusion, blur the image. So, the many half lights of this present life falling upon a human character, often lead to confusion and concealment. Self-showing is bad; character is counterfeited; society is deceived. It needs the hand of death to lift a man up out of these opposing and contradictory lights, and set him in an atmosphere which falsehood cannot breathe; where moral life is transparent, where the whole universe shall see through him. Human lives

here are like clocks, heavily wrapped about with concealing coverings. The face is scarcely discernible, the ticking is muffled. Death lifts them up out of their hiding-places, and shows them all uncovered, — glass-cased. You can see everywhere. You can note every pendulum stroke. You can hear every tick.

"In him is light, and no darkness at all." "Then shall we know, even as we are known." "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by my Gospel." Such is the light, such the self-showing, such the revelation of character, which is coming.

Now, human lives are like seeds which lie in the husks. Custom, habit, repression, dissimulation of a hundred kinds, are the husks. But, through all these, the hand of judgment will reach for the true kernel of manhood. Fold after fold, garment after garment, woven in this false world, cut out and fitted by hands of deception, will be torn off, until the true man — self-knowing and universally known — will be disclosed, will stand forth, to remain for ever "as he thinketh in his heart."

You see, my hearers, how true the text. The sweep, the progress of every life is forward, towards the evolution, the embodiment of its heart purpose. The distance which separates it from this realization is even now, not the result of its own choice; and the

day is coming, surely coming, either in this world or the next, when this separation shall be wiped out; when the outer and the inner life of man, like two concentric rings, shall meet and melt into one. Heart and life, character and reputation, being and position, are only temporarily divergent, and while this divergence lasts, it is by his heart purpose only, that the man can be known. This it is which draws the horoscope of his future. This, and this alone, is it which puts *what shall be* into *what is* his own place.

Receive, in conclusion, two or three inferential lessons. First: *tendency is every thing in the moral world.* I do not ask you, my hearers, how far you have gone. This makes little difference. In this world we but commence a life, and the amount of actual separation already placed between the best and the worst man is very small. The direction in which men face, this it is which counts every thing here, this it is which separates human lives. And my question of you this night, my hearers, is, Which way are you facing? Toward perfect honesty, toward purity, toward benevolence, toward Christ? Or are you facing toward duplicity, toward impurity, toward malevolence, toward Belial? I ask not to what you have come. This hardly any of us could answer. But I ask you this: Which way are you going? In what direction is your life tending? Toward peace, toward heaven, or not. This is the all-important question here. At what goal are you aiming? This, of all moral interrogatories, is the most meaning.

Secondly: this subject furnishes the explanation

for *the widely different destinies of the Christian and the Unchristian life.* We hear it said continually, "Look at them. What is the difference between the two?" Well, there is not much now: save in the tendencies of their being, in the directions in which they are going, they are very much alike. Two men upon the surface of the earth stand side by side, touching each other; with their faces in opposite directions, they move forward: when shall they meet? Only when they have travelled the circuit of our globe. So, morally, in the same world, in the same community, in the same family, stand brothers side by side, yet with their faces turned to opposite poles. When shall they meet? Only when they have made the circuit of the Infinite.

The heart state, the heart thought, — this is the true man; and in this, potentially, as in a seed lies his future. Out of this, as from a seed, shall grow the difference which shall impress and everlastingly separate two lives which are now, in their actual development, so much alike.

A third inference from this subject is, — *the necessity of making charitable judgment of our fellow-men;* or, what is better still, *abstaining from all judgment of them.* There are excellent reasons for this. What we see is not the true man, only the envelope of the man. What we have as premises for our conclusions, here, is not the full expression of the inner life, but only a few occasional and imperfect manifestations of this life. It is as if you should walk through a strange orchard in the autumn. Your attention is

drawn to a tree with a few scrawny apples upon it, and you say to the owner, "Why don't you cut that tree down? It does not deserve its place in your orchard." This you say, while the owner replies, "Cut that tree down! Why, it is one of my rarest varieties! But things have been against it this year. In the first place, last winter the rabbits almost girdled it, and then in the early summer it was well-nigh uprooted by a violent storm. But it is coming on, and next year I will show you the finest fruit of the orchard on this tree."

So we look upon a human life, and judging it by a few imperfect expressions of its true character, condemn it absolutely. But, in the mean time, the Great Husbandman is saying, "Circumstances have been against him so far, but the true life is there." Brethren, we do but look upon the houses in which men dwell, and how can we judge of a man in this way, — of his true, of his real self, by looking at his house front? Let us wait. There is an Omniscient Judge, and a day of light is coming. Let us judge nothing before the time.

A fourth inference from this subject is one of *encouragement to those who are true and good at heart.* You look upon what you have done, upon that part of yourself which you have expressed in life, and say, "It is wretchedly poor and unbeautiful!" So it may be. But that is not your true self, that is not your ideal of beauty and goodness. It is only a very lame and imperfect expression of your character, and you will yet do better than this. Like the artist, you

will improve in the matter of expression. You will come unto acts and life which are more nearly accordant with your inner self. And in the mean time, while you are chiselling away, and painting away, remember that the One who judges you, does this not by what you have produced, but by what is within you, by what you are aiming at. He knows the picture you would paint if you could, and according to that is your acceptance and reward.

A fifth inference is one of *discouragement to the life which is false at heart.* Such a one may look upon his conduct, and say, "Well, I don't see that it is much worse than the conduct of those who profess to be good." So it may not be. But the vileness of the fountain does not muddy all the stream at once. Disease is in the blood before it blotches the face or disfigures the body. No more than *goodness* of heart, does *badness* have its full expression at once. Still the false, the impure, heart is the true man even now. Before God, this inner life is already developed, and the Unchristian man of to-day is what he shall grow to throughout a Christless eternity.

But again: the subject discloses *the possibility of true self-judgment even now.* You may have been often baffled in your life aims; you may have succeeded only very poorly in putting your true self into action. Looking upon the record of your life, it might be difficult, even for yourself, to say what you are, and where you stand. But what have you been striving for, what have you been aiming at these years? What has been your life standard, your life

ambition? To-day, what are you thinking of as the best and noblest portion, — as the best and noblest success of the human life? This, *your heart thought*, will give you your true character. Would you rather be rich than good? If so, there is your true self, and you may recognize it. Would you rather have honor than purity? If to-day, even in this hour, your life should sweep on to its goal; if at this present moment your governing desire could be realized; if now, at once, you might be just what your heart wishes, — where would such a realization place you? Would it leave you pure in heart, loving man, praising God, doing good? Or would it leave you rich, sleek of external, successful, as men count success? Whichever of these is your *possible self to-day*, such is your *true self;* towards this you are going; as such, you are even now judged.

My hearers, I leave the subject with you, adding only this thought. Your *heart disposition*, your *life tendency*, is your *true self;* and upon this, now and evermore, rests the condemnation or benediction of that Eternal Truth, which, in the hands of God, is the arbiter of human destiny.

II.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS.

"BUT I KEEP UNDER MY BODY, AND BRING IT INTO SUBJECTION: LEST THAT BY ANY MEANS, WHEN I HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS, I MYSELF SHOULD BE A CASTAWAY." — 1 Cor. ix. 27.

THIS is the language and experience of the Apostle Paul. It suggests, first, what we may call *the many-sidedness of Scripture*, or, perhaps still better, *its polarity*.

Take a bar of magnetized iron, and one end of it will attract what the other end repels. Now break the bar in the middle; and of either half the same will be true, that one end of it will attract, while the other end repels the same thing. And so you may keep on breaking and lessening, until you come unto the atom, and even in it the two poles will be found to exist. Even the minutest iron filing has its duality, its oppositions, its polarity. Tyndall says of a most eminent philosopher, that he may be said to have spent his life gazing into this infinite perspective, back into which, down along which, run, in an ever-narrowing path, these two disagreeing and irreconcilable forces. And the last that he saw of them, the last report which his microscope gave of them, was this, "They are now within the smallest atom, an atom so small,

that scores of them might pass abreast through the eye of a needle. But still the old enemies have not met, they have not shaken hands, they have not touched each other, they have not consented to be one."

Strange, beautifully strange, is it not, my hearers? But not more wonderful, I think, than the polarity of that truth which relates the finite with the infinite, and which comes out in the Word of God. Take this declaration from the mouth of Revelation, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor." And place this alongside of the text, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest, that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." The effect of these two truths upon the human mind, through all the generations, can be likened to nothing, more illustrative, than to the two poles of the magnet. Bring the latter near to a Calvinist, and it repels and is repelled. Bring it near to an Arminian, and it attracts and is itself attracted. And so, *vice versa*, of the former text. Carefully move it over toward an Arminian, and you will see him recede. Gently push it toward a Calvinist, and you will see him attracted.

And so, up before the human mind, rise these two truths, — *Divine sovereignty* and *human responsibility*, — drawing nearer and still nearer to each other, as they reach up unto God; but, so far as the perception of the human mind can follow them, still apart, still unreconciled. But as in the magnet there is but one force manifesting itself in duality, so here, we must

believe there is but the one truth of man's relation to the Infinite One manifesting itself under these apparent contradictions. God is not mocked; God cannot be thwarted; God cannot be disappointed. This is one pole of the truth here, of truth which binds you and me to God, — truth which we need to know, and under the inspiration of which we need to live. Then, on the other side, man is free, man is responsible, he can make or unmake himself. This is the other pole, and it also is truth which we need to know, and to feel day by day. "Hath not the potter power over the clay?" This, taken by itself, is *fatality*. And on the other side, "I keep under my body, lest I be a castaway." This, by itself emphasized, *shuts God out of human history, makes the individual the architect of his own destiny, in a sense no created and dependent being may be.*

What then shall Theology do here? Why, let her follow the example of Philosophy, and give equal justice to both poles of truth. The philosopher does not say, as he looks upon the needle, "There must be some mistake in the matter. Surely, the needle is not one thing at one end, and quite another and different thing at the other end. At any rate, I cannot, in justice to my system, recognize duality here." The philosopher does not so reason. But he writes down what he sees. He says, "This is a great mystery. But there are the two poles, and one is as deserving of my attention as the other." So let Theology do. Let her state and teach what Revelation has stated and taught. She may not, in this way, be able to construct

a system ; but she will communicate, what is far better, God's truth, as He wishes men to have it, in its many-sidedness, not designed for the potter's clay of philosophy, but for practical effect upon the hearts and lives of men. And what shall you and I do with whom the great question is not theology, but salvation ? Why, let the truth of God smite us, or let it comfort us with any one of its hundred hands.

And now, I turn to the practical lesson of the text. It brings into view what we may call *human responsibility for the lower or physical conditions of spiritual life.*

If we conceive of religion as reaching up through several spheres, more or less high, then the words of the Apostle have reference to the dangers which surround it and the foes which attack it in the lowest spheres of all. As a plant has its enemies which crawl upon the ground, attacking it from that point, and others which fly in the air, so the spiritual life has its antagonists who come forth to meet it on every level of the natural life. There is the danger to religion from high and profound intellectualism. Also in the still higher region of imagination and the affections. Then also, on the lowest and widest level, in the physical region, there is often the marshalling of forces to oppose all growth in grace, and all religious development. And these are what the Apostle alludes to. He does not say, "I must be on my guard against scepticism of the intellect. I must be careful in the guidance and control of my affections." But this is what he says, "I must keep my body under," "I must bring the physical into subjection to the spiritual, or be a castaway."

Evidently, the Apostle refers to the power of certain physical conditions to check and to destroy the life of the soul. The first which I particularize is, *excessive development of physical appetite and passion.* That this has the fearful power implied in the text, such power over the spiritual life as to check and ultimately destroy it, rendering the man a castaway, is very evident. The first and most patent effect upon a man, of any such passion or appetite, is upon his religious life. Take the professing Christian man who is given to intemperance. This fact will become apparent first of all in his relations to the Church, in the earnestness and faithfulness of his Christian life. His bodily health will not tell the sad tale so quickly as will his spiritual health. Before you can trace the handwriting of the vice upon the countenance, before you are able to mark its disturbing power in the domestic sphere, you will be able to note its influence upon the pulse of the man's religion. This is the first thing which is affected.

The man, who is yielding to some of his baser appetites, dies like some trees, from the heart outward. First and foremost, dies that within him which is the very core of his manhood, — his spiritual sense. This goes first, because it is weakest, the most delicate. When in the autumn, the first frost falls, the choicest, the most tender, plants wilt first under it. The rare exotic will succumb, while the hardier native plant will show not so much as a mark of the death-bearing influence. Now the religious life of man is this exotic; and under the congealing influence of

physical vice, before this baleful death-influence which creeps through the soul, it is the first to suffer and to die. And, besides being the weakest, religion is that in man which is most directly antagonized by the growing power, the strengthening demon of animalism.

There is much within man with which the indulged vice may make some sort of terms, may arrange to live in the same home. It may so agree, for a time, with love of family, with desire for a good name before men, with many of the higher tastes and ambitions and activities of the human life. The intemperate man or the licentious man is not at once thrown out of all his former relations to the world, does not at once show a change in all the features of his natural character. But in his relation to God, he must change and change at once. His vices and spiritual life cannot exist together. They cannot breathe the same air. The life of the one is the death of the other. Hence we always see, that the first vicious indulgence shows itself at once by marked perturbations in the religious life. At first, and often for long it may be, no one can say what is the disturbing power. The man restrains prayer. He drops out of the prayer-meeting. He absents himself from communion, and no one knows what is the matter.

Some time since, astronomers were very much puzzled by certain strange movements in one of the heavenly bodies. The perturbations were such that they could not be accounted for by the action of any known force. But with their telescopes they went on hunting, and soon found the disturbing agent. This

was a neighbor planet hitherto unseen. So, the mysterious irregularities in a man's moral life are often explained. Farther and closer observation discovers the disturbing power. It comes into the field of our vision, in the shape of intemperance or licentiousness or some other bodily vice.

And this baleful influence of physical appetite and passion upon spiritual life is proved by the words of scripture, in which is pictured the ultimate result. "Be not deceived, says the Apostle, neither drunkards, nor adulterers, nor covetous, shall inherit the kingdom of God." And again, "The works of the flesh are these, adultery, uncleanness, drunkenness, of the which as I have told you in time past, they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." That is, the ultimate result of spiritual life cannot consist with, but is exclusive of, this physical excess. The former tends unto salvation, is a process of elevation, of purification reaching unto perfectness. While the latter is a process of degradation, of pollution, tending unto destruction. The final state, the goal of spiritual life, is heaven. The final state, the goal of excessive animalism, is hell.

This then makes up to us the first physical condition which antagonizes religion, and which a man must overcome or be a castaway. No matter how long a Christian, what his faith or hope, what attainment made, or to what experience reached; if he yield here, all is lost. Here, a Christian can stand only as Paul stood. Under God and by the mighty effort of his own will, he must bring the body into

subjection, subordinating all its passions to the lofty and imperilled interests of the immortal life.

A second physical condition which antagonizes the growth and safety of religion is *too great absorption in the cares of this world.* The Bible commends fidelity and earnestness in all that a man puts his hands to. "Not slothful in business," is its language. Diligence is a Christian virtue. It is one of the high obligations of the Christian, to do with his might that which his hand findeth to do. But there must be subordination here; subordination of the seen to the unseen, of the *temporal* interests of the life to the *eternal.* Like Paul, a man must here also keep the physical under and bring it into subjection. And here comes into view this second physical condition which stands in the way of growth in grace. It is when the cares of the world enter in so as to choke the Word. In other words, it is simply excess of the physical again; this time, however, not in the direction of vice, but in the direction of business and worldly care.

A man is like a vessel. He can hold so much, and no more. Now if this quantity be present, no matter of what it may be, the man is full, preoccupied, absorbed. It makes no difference what the liquid is which you pour into a cask, if you pour a certain quantity into it you equal its capacity, as well with wine as with milk, as well with water as with wine; so the capacity of a man may be met with the cares of this world. They may pour themselves, or he may pour them, into his soul in such quantity as to leave

room for nothing else. They may spring up so rank and thick within him, as to take up into themselves all the nutriment of his being.

So many a man is physically conditioned. He has no taste, no capacity, no strength, no time for any thing else. He scarcely knows the faces of his family. He never reads any thing longer than a stock or market report. He has no time for the cultivation of his mind, none for the development of his manhood, none for the care of his immortal soul. He has become simply an animate engine. His food and drink are the fuel which he throws under the boiler; his driving wheel, the purpose to be rich; and the track along which he flies, mammon's glittering rails, spanning the whole peninsula of time. How can the spiritual thrive or grow, or hold its own in such a man? Where will you find place in him for religion? The simple state of the case is, the man is full. The plain truth is, all the energies of his being are already absorbed. The man is wholly taken possession of by the physical. The world's cares, like so many strong men armed, have driven out all before them, and now rule over and occupy every capacity for thought, for feeling, and for action! The good seed is choked.

And the result is the same, if honor instead of wealth fills the man. The particular type makes no difference. The condition of danger only is, that a man be filled, be absorbed with the cares of this world. And these may be generated by poverty and weakness and disappointment, as truly as by affluence and success and increasing power. There are

not a few in the world whose whole soul and mind and being are daily consumed in reflection upon their poverty, their sore necessity, their approaching want. Their fears may be all without foundation, and their cares purely artificial; but this does not prevent their absorption of human capacity, their diversion to themselves and consumption of all the energies of the being. What chance is there for the spiritual to assert itself under such circumstances? How can a man grow in Christian life, in love, in peace, and trust, who cannot forget his worldly cares long enough to say the Lord's Prayer? Why, the thing is impossible! Into such a life, the Word of God cannot come, and no other of the means of grace can come. And, of course, but one result is possible; the religious life must succumb, must die of starvation, and the man become a castaway.

This, then, is a second physical condition which is in conflict with the law of spiritual life, — over-absorption in the cares of the world. A man must find time for thought, time for prayer, time for attention to the wants of his spiritual and immortal nature, or he must go down. Like Paul, he must stand up in the might of his Christian purpose, determined that all else, all parts and portions of the lower and physical life, shall be subordinated to the salvation of his soul. He must do this, or become, what Paul feared, a castaway, a spirit bankrupt and beggared for evermore.

I mention a third physical condition which operates as a check and hinderance, and oftentimes as the

destruction of spiritual life. It is the *atmosphere of selfish indolence.* Work is ordained of God. It is one of His original institutes. Adam, in his state of perfection, was put into the garden to dress and to keep it. Work, an intelligent and fruitful activity, was thus made the one condition of healthful development, and to this day it remains as such. What Dr. Watts wrote for children, is true for all periods of life, "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." The mind must act, and if it cannot do so normally and healthfully, it will do so morbidly and injuriously. Now, occupation, something to do and which is so good that it deserves to be done, some life aim, it is which furnishes the natural and only healthful outlet for this force of life. It is the very ruin of thousands of both men and women in all our large cities that they have nothing to do.

And that which was made the condition of human development at first Christ has lifted up and sanctified to the end of Christian growth and safety. His command is, "Son, go work in my vineyard." "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me; for whosoever will save his life (keep it all to himself, inactive and unproductive) shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life (lose it in a constant expenditure) shall save it." So does Christ lay down the condition of religious growth and safety. Not that occupation, in itself, has any power to lift a man above sin, but that it furnishes the condition through which Christ's power acts. For the child to have something to do, is not one and the same thing with

its being kind and loving and obedient; but occupation, and through this, usefulness of life is the soil in which love and obedience can be most readily grown.

And let no one, by any species of mystical faith, delude himself with the idea that the higher spiritual agencies of soul salvation dispense with or work independently of the normal laws and conditions of human life. Why, if a man eat too much his spiritual life is checked, is hindered. So, if he work too much. So, if he be idle. Christ works through means. He saves men through the home, through the school, through temperance, through all the normal obligations and relations under which He has placed human life. That is, His grace sanctifies these as means, uses them as channels through which His saving power flows out to human necessity. And if a man wilfully transgress in his lower life, he does so much to throw himself out of relation to Christ, to sever the connection between himself and his Saviour. This is why the man who has deluged himself with worldly cares cannot be saved. This is the reason why the dissipated man cannot grow in grace. And it is also the explanation of the fact, that an aimless, idle, indolent life furnishes a condition most antagonistic to the progress and continuance of God's work in the soul.

I only mention, without dwelling upon it, another physical hinderance to spiritual life. It is the *predominance of irreligious association*, or, what is the same thing, *living in a bad moral atmosphere.* Good

air, God's sunshine, — these are more to the body than all else. They are the great and unchanging conditions of its health, under which and through which must work all other lesser and individual agencies, — cleanliness, exercise, diet, regularity in habits of life. These may be all in great part neutralized by a violation of a condition of health more fundamental than any of them. Let a man breathe in noxious gases day by day, and, it makes no difference what other special precautions he may take, his health will be gradually undermined.

So is it of moral and spiritual health. It depends much upon the character of its surroundings. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." A man cannot put his hand in the fire and not be burned. Hence the importance which, in Scripture, is laid upon the separation of Christians from the world, and upon the Christian communion which has been prepared for them. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." And this: "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another." And the invitation of the church, "Come with us and we will do you good." It is possible for every man to surround himself with religious associations. He may do so wherever he is or whatever his business; or it is possible for him to live outside of them altogether. But, if he does the latter, with his own hands he places his religion in imminent peril, with his own hands he organizes danger and defeat. No man is strong enough to stand by himself. And it was never intended that the greater part of any Christian

life should be spent outside of all religious association.

In view of all that has been said upon these physical conditions which imperil the safety of the spiritual life, it follows: *That Christian cultivation covers a much wider sphere than many seem to think.* First in order, as a means of grace, stands the Church. So important, so necessary, are her privileges and duties to man, that they have, with common consent, come to be spoken of as *the* means of grace. And no man can do without them. No man is wise enough, or strong enough, or self-helpful enough, to forego them. They are divinely ordained for the spiritual necessities. And then, secondly, outside of and beyond these agencies and helps, ordinarily known as means of grace, there are others none the less needful, and whose places cannot be supplied by ever so good attention to the Church and her ordinances. What matters it how much a man prays, if he is living in intemperance or impurity? Will prayer save him? What good will the communion do her who has sunken down into the depths of a perfectly selfish and indolent life? Will bread and wine transform her into the image of Christ? And take the man whose heart is eaten up with the cares of this world, whose one consuming thought is business, — money, money; honor, honor. Can the Word of God dwell richly in such a one? Where? In what part of him?

You see, my hearers, what a wide field the salvation of a man covers. A field just as wide as his

danger. No one can be more urgent than I am that you should make diligent use of all the means of grace afforded by the Church. But I tell you your responsibility to your religious life is much wider than this. Outside of the Church there are, what we have termed, the physical conditions of spiritual life, and these are in your power. These you must see to. These you must prepare with a view to your moral safety. These you must subordinate to the purpose of your spiritual progress.

My second remark upon the whole subject is this: *There is no point in the Christian's progress, at which he can afford to relax in vigilant watch and care of the physical surroundings of his life.* No mere man ever yet was lifted up above the power of these. There never was that saint upon earth, whose saint-hood strong drinking could not destroy. There never was human mind so spiritual, but that God could be shut out of it by the accumulation of earthly cares. Look at Paul. Far ahead of any of us, he stops to throw back these words to us. "I feel that I am yet in danger. It is a constant struggle with me to keep under my body."

My hearers, you cannot be too careful in your watch over the physical. See how men are going down around you, becoming dishonest, intemperate, impure, making shipwreck of their religious life. If you stand, it will be God who upholds you I know; but God does not save from drowning the man who throws himself over Niagara. Nor does He save from death the one who swallows poison. Neither

will He save you if you voluntarily ignore the conditions of safety.

Again. This subject points out a very wide sphere, in which human activity may co-operate with the saving power of God. Many Christian hands are idle, because they do not know what to do. To such, I say, look at Paul. Hear his words, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection." Learn from these words that a great work, and one which is peculiarly your own, daily waits for you upon the level of the natural and the ordinary. You are so to place and hold your life that God's grace shall not be frustrated. You are so to arrange the physical conditions which God has put into your power, that they shall not hinder your spiritual life.

And now the question is, "Are you ready to do this?" Are you ready to give yourselves into Christ's hands, ready to marshal all the powers of your being under His leadership, ready to subordinate every thing else to your moral welfare, — in a word, are you ready, willing, to be saved? Ah! my hearers, we are not straitened in God, but in ourselves. And men fail, men make shipwreck, because that, for temporary gain or pleasure, they are willing to ignore the most common and fundamental conditions of spiritual safety, — conditions plainly laid down, and as plainly within the sweep of human power.

III.

THE GREAT REQUIREMENT.

"And Jesus said unto them, come ye after me."—Mark. i. 17.

NEITHER argument nor numerous citations from Scripture are necessary, I think, to lift up before your minds the great truth that God has appointed *faith to be the solitary and the indispensable condition of salvation.* I will not therefore delay you upon the exhibit of this truth farther than to refer your attention to two or three of its more prominent expressions in the Bible. "The just shall live by faith," declares the Prophet of the Old Testament; and this sentiment is reiterated by the New Testament Apostle, and in the same words, "The just shall live by faith." You will also find written upon these pages this other declaration, equally pertinent and conclusive upon the same point, "We are saved by grace through faith." And in an historical case, presented to us in the Acts of the Apostles, when an individual, out of the heart of an intense desire, and out of the agony of a great fear, addressed to an Apostle this question, "What must I do to be saved?" the answer came plain, direct, and unmistakable in these words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." These

citations will, I think, be sufficient to bring very clearly before your minds the great truth, which indeed runs all through the Bible, that *faith is the divinely arranged and divinely named condition of eternal life and human blessedness.*

But, judging from the experience of my own mind, as it has dwelt upon this matter, I think that the question must often have occurred to you, Why has faith been made the condition of salvation? What is there in the nature of faith which entitles it to this solitary prominence, and in virtue of which it is fraught with such tremendous importance? Permit me therefore this morning, while I speak to you from the Word of God, to address my remarks to the answering of this question, and to the application of this answer in all its far-reaching significance, to the condition and necessity of our present lives.

The question then before us, is this, Why has faith been made the condition of salvation? And its answer is (an answer which I hope to justify, both from the nature of the case and from the plain words of the Bible), — the answer is, *Because faith is, in man, the principle of action.* In other words, man is so made that life is the result of and is governed by belief, that the persuasion of the mind determines the conduct of the life. And this is why faith is named as the condition of salvation. A moment's notice will suffice to show you that this is true of human life in general in all departments of man's activity, and upon all the levels of human being and action.

Take the matter of what we term the different

callings of life. Why is one man in the profession of law? Is it not because he believed, that, all things considered, this was the best place for him, that he could accomplish most and enjoy himself in this profession? In other words, he had faith in the law, in its pleasantness, in its possibilities, and therefore entered upon it. So, another man entered upon the practice of medicine. He believed it was best suited to his taste and talents. He believed that he would be the most apt to succeed in this calling, and so chose it, so turned his life in this direction. The minister is also in the sacred desk because he believed that duty called him there; because he believes that he can best discharge life's great obligation by preaching the gospel of Christ to his fellow-men.

In all these cases, belief governs life, faith originates and inspires action. And it is so in every other matter. We are what we are, we do what we do, because of the persuasion of our mind which we denominate faith. You are a worshipper here this morning, and upon other days, because you believe in a God, and in the propriety and the obligation of worshipping Him. So, every connected series of human acts, every course of conduct, originates in a conviction of the mind. Life flows from faith as from a fountain. It hangs upon faith as fruit hangs upon a tree. Man, as an intelligent being, must have a motive for action, and this motive is found in the conviction of his mind; in other words, in faith.

Now, the moral man is not another being from the secular man, but the same being acting in another

sphere. You who, upon the secular days of the week, buy and sell, dispense physic, practise law, do household work, are the same persons who to-day confess your faith in Christ, and sing praises unto His name. Hence it is true in religion as in all other matters, that faith is the principle of action, that belief governs life. And this is why God has named faith as the condition of salvation. This, I think, will appear clear unto you if you consider the existence in the Bible of many equivalents for faith considered as the condition of salvation.

"Repentance" is set forth and used as such an equivalent. If you will turn to the third chapter of the second epistle of Peter, ninth verse, you will find these words, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." In this verse most evidently, repentance, and not faith, stands as the antithesis of soul destruction; that is, as the condition of salvation. If this verse only, of all God's Revelation, should come unto a living man advising him of his danger, and of what he must do in order to escape this danger, its voice manifestly would be, "Sin, wrong-doing, this is your peril. Repentance, a turning from this evil course, is your only hope of escape, the one condition of your salvation." So also, in the Gospel according to Luke, we have these words from the mouth of the Saviour Himself, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Here again, notice that not a word is said about faith, but repent-

ance is put forth as the one condition of salvation. And so also, an Apostle, in another place, speaks of "repentance unto life."

And now, my hearers, I ask you, How could repentance be thus set forth as the condition of eternal life, if faith, in and of itself, is this condition? Manifestly, it could not. But if we take the view, that faith is asked for, only because it is the principle of action, then we can easily see why repentance may also be spoken of as the condition of salvation. Faith in Christ saves, because this faith in Christ leads unto the life of Christ. So repentance saves, because repentance of sin, the turning away from the wrong life, is equivalent to the taking up of the right life.

And not only repentance, but love also, is set forth as an equivalent for faith, and is named as the condition of salvation. Turn to 1 Cor. ii. 9. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that (what? believe on Him? No, but) love Him." So it is declared that those who *love* God are heirs to all the unending riches and glory of His infinite reward. So also is knowledge set forth as the condition of salvation. Thus, in John xvii. 3, "And this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

And now, my hearers, it seems to me that these citations of Scripture equivalents for faith are sufficient to prove this fact, that it is not *faith in itself* which God wants, but the *life unto which faith leads.* For surely if this were not so, then the condition of

salvation could not be given in these other terms which I have quoted. If faith, as such, is this condition, then repentance is not this condition, and knowledge is not this condition, and love is not this condition. For knowledge is not faith, love is not faith, repentance is not faith. But if faith is named as the condition, because faith leads unto that life which God approves, then this condition may be given in other affections of the mind and heart, which, as surely, are connected with and produce this life. And this is why we find these equivalents for faith upon the pages of the Bible. The man who loves the Saviour will follow the Saviour; therefore *love* is the condition of salvation. The man who knows the Saviour, in his truth and beauty and power, will bend to the Saviour in his daily life; so *knowledge* may be given as the condition of salvation. So, the man who repents, who turns from his sins, as surely in this act turns unto the Christian life; and therefore *repentance* is set forth as the condition of salvation.

In brief, the condition of salvation, being a life of obedience to God, is variously set forth, according as this or that persuasion of the mind or passion of the soul is regarded as the producing cause of this right life.

If *love* be the producing cause, love is the condition.

If *knowledge* be the producing cause, knowledge is the condition.

If *repentance* be the producing cause, repentance is the condition.

If *faith* be the producing cause, faith is the condition.

This truth will also appear from consideration of the Scripture examples of faith. You will find a wonderful catalogue, a most brilliant record, of these in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. From the numerous list there recorded, I will take but one, — the most eminent, — Abraham, the Father of the Faithful. If you will refer to the chapter which I have named, you will discover that the virtue of his faith is made to reside altogether in the action which it inspired, and the conduct unto which it led. "By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out." And again, "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac." So you observe, my hearers, that all the importance of the faith of Abraham is found in its fruitage of life. In other words, his faith is named, is praised, because it was in him the principle of action, the producing cause of an obedient life.

And no doubt, the sense and force of the passages which I have quoted would remain, if for the word *faith* we should substitute the word *love*. Thus, "By love, Abraham, when he was called to leave his own country, obeyed and went." Obeyed, because he was the friend of God; because he loved God. It is very evident at least, that the virtue of old Abraham's faith is considered as residing in the life to which it led. And so we must believe it is now. It is not our faith, as faith, which God wants, but an obedient life; and

faith is named as the condition of salvation, simply because it leads to this life.

But does any one ask, "Is then Christian obedience the ground of our salvation?" I reply, "It is not possible for any obedience of ours to possess any such merit." But although the Christian life is no legal title to heaven, it is something quite as good. It is the commencement of heaven in the heart, and it holds from the Saviour the immutable promise that this heaven shall be perfected and endure for evermore. In other words, the Saviour promises salvation upon the condition of *obedience;* that those who follow Him through this world shall, by so doing, come unto Him, into His presence and unto the witnessing of his glory.

Again: the same truth is evident from the Bible description of the operation of *saving faith.* Thus it is declared in one of the Epistles, "Faith without works is dead." What plainer proof do we require, my hearers, than that furnished by these words, to the truth, that it is not *faith, as such,* which is the condition of salvation, but *faith considered as the principle of action.* Why, the proof here is not only sufficient, but most emphatic. The Apostle conceives of a case where faith remains as faith dissevered from life, and, fixing his eye upon it, declares, That is not what God asks for, that is of no moral worth, that it is dead because it is not a principle of life. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

And the Apostle Paul furnishes proof of the same kind, when he declares, "In Jesus Christ, neither cir-

cumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Similar also is the testimony of the Apostle Peter, when he mentions as necessary additions to faith, such moral qualities as these, — virtue, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. In both of these last-named cases, the testimony is the same. That it is not *faith as an immanent act of the mind* which God asks for, not *faith as faith*, but *faith as a principle of action*, faith viewed as the producing cause of an obedient life.

The faith which the Bible mentions with such emphasis is the root-principle of all right moral development, is that which works unto an expression in right living. And since this development, this outworking, here is declared to be necessary ; since that, without it, faith is accounted as absolutely worthless, as dead, as if it were not, — the conclusion is inevitable, that faith is named as the condition of salvation, only because it is viewed as the principle of action, the inspiration and the motive of life. The man follows Christ, because he believes, has faith, in Christ ; and this, its connection with life, is the only reason why such prominence and importance are assigned to faith.

But I pass on to another argument illustrating the same truth. Everywhere in the Bible, the condition of salvation is regarded and spoken of, as though it were *most simple in itself, and so plainly expressed* that no one could possibly mistake it. " He who runs may read," may well be the Bible's declaration in respect of its own showing in this matter.

But what is the case, what has been the case in the Church through all the centuries, and wherever faith, as such, as an act of the mind or an affection of the heart, has been regarded as the condition of salvation? Why, this has been the case. In the Church at large, there has been endless controversy as to the meaning of faith, as to the elements which enter into it, and as to its connection with life. And in the individual Christian life, there has been constant doubt, whether or not faith has been exercised. To-day, there are in the Church multitudes of Christians who have never yet known peace, who have never been able to call themselves Christians with any degree of assurance or joy. Endless controversy, troubled cases of individual experience the world over, — proof enough these, I take it, of the fact, that it is not faith as such, not faith as an activity of the mind or an affection of the heart, which makes up that way, which the Bible regards as being so plain that the wayfaring man may not err therein.

Another argument to this same effect is found *in the nature of things, or in the necessary judgment of the human mind.* We are made in the image of God, and for many conclusions we need no other proof than that we are compelled unto belief in them by the very constitution of our nature. And have we not one of these self-evident and necessary conclusions here? Is it possible for you to conceive of the All-Wise and Beneficent God, founding His eternal judgment of men upon faith considered as an act of the mind? Take this case. Here are two men. Between

their lives there is no apparent difference; but one of them has performed a certain act of belief, and the other has not. Now, shall one of these men be lifted up into heaven, and the other thrust down to hell? Can you conceive of God so acting? In the answer to this question, my hearers, I think you will find farther proof of the fact that faith is named as the condition of salvation, simply because faith in man is the principle of action, the fountain from which flows the stream of life.

But I must turn unto the brief consideration of the practical value of the truth for which such abundant confirmation has been found.

In the first place, let me say, that it *furnishes a test by the use of which any one may very easily determine whether or not he is a Christian.* Nothing will make me believe that the Saviour intended that any one of His disciples should pass through life deprived of the strength and the joy of knowing himself as such. Peace, peace, "My peace, I leave with you." In words of this character and sweetness did Jesus embody His parting love and bestow His final benediction. But to the disciple who is not able to believe that he is such, who does not know that he is a Christian, comes no peace. It is impossible that such a one should be at rest in his mind. His great and ever-recurring doubt will keep him in constant fear, and fear hath torment in it. The test therefore of Christian life must be a simple one, — one that the humblest may use, and one from the use of which absolute certainty shall come.

And such a test is furnished by the truth to which I have this day pointed your attention. According to the plainest words of the Bible, the genesis of the Christian life is a varied one. Now it originates in love, now again in fear, still again in that conviction of the mind which is denominated faith. What then? Shall we attempt the analysis of our inner life in order to ascertain whether or not we are Christians? This is a very difficult task. More than this, it calls to the examination of that which is not, in itself, the condition of salvation. Love is not that condition, but love which leads unto obedience. Repentance is not this condition, but repentance which is unto the new and right life. And it has been found that faith is not this condition, but faith which worketh by love.

Why not then turn unto the one essential, unto what, in various ways, these inner experiences lead to, and in which all their importance is found; viz., Life. This surely is the true method. Is your life a following of the Saviour? Is His will your highest law? Is obedience to Him the governing principle of your daily conduct? If so, however little experience you may have had, you have surely had enough. If not, however much experience you may have had, it is absolutely worthless.

I make a second use of this truth which we have considered, by saying that it *wonderfully simplifies the initial act of the Christian life.* Robert Hall said that the Gospel was so laid down by ministers, that a man of common sense did not know how to take it

up. True, too true. For years I waited for something, for some experience, which should make me a Christian. So, I have no doubt, many are waiting to-day. But there is no necessity for such waiting. What Christ demands of men, of you, is, that you "take up the cross and follow Him." Are you willing to do this? Then commence at once. Say you that you have no feeling, that you have but little sorrow for sin, that your love is weak, that you possess not faith. But these are not the condition of salvation, and therefore are no objection to your entering upon the Christian life without them, if you will to do so. It is not any feeling which is to save you, but Christ; and, if you are *willing* to follow Him, you are *ready* to commence the Christian life to-day, at this very hour.

A third use of this subject discloses *how completely the obligation to be a Christian rests upon every man unto whom the Gospel has come.* To-day is the day of salvation, because to-day, the true, the better life is before you; and to-day is the day of guilt, if you refuse to take up this life. No future day shall ever come which shall render more complete your obligation in this matter than it is at this hour.

Finally, this subject lays broad *the ground of future judgment.* The condition of salvation is no mental act which lies outside of the power of your will. It is no feeling or emotion or experience which is not an object of your volition. But it is turning unto the true life which the Saviour has disclosed, and which He has commanded. It is bowing with true loyalty

before that which you know to be good in itself, and binding upon you. Are you holding back from this life? Lies Christ's cross before you, not taken up? If so, you are condemned in your own hearts to-day, and with a condemnation which the coming Day of Judgment shall reaffirm with the force of an eternal sentence.

IV.

SPIRITUAL ASSIMILATION.

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life." — John vi. 35.

IT is not what a man eats, but what he digests, that nourishes him. There may be the taking of the material of food, the physical appropriation of it, without any benefit; nay, sometimes with harm even. There is many a weak and dying man in the world at this hour, who could take a mouthful, perhaps many mouthfuls of food; that is, he could swallow this much. But if, in such a case, food were taken, it would do no good. It would remain unchanged within the body. In other words, it would not become nutriment to the body; but, for want of digestion and assimilation, would continue the mere material of food.

Now, so it is with that *truth* which is food for the mind, which is *the soul's nutriment.* There is a certain kind of truth which needs only to be heard, only to be received: facts about the sun or earth, about light and heat and electricity. All that you need to do in respect to these truths is to get them, to store them away in your mind. Thus, for instance, the sun is ninety-two millions of miles from the earth.

There! that is all you need to do about this, — just to hear it; of course with as much faith as possible, in the sublime guess. So, in respect to light. It is by emanation, it is by undulation. Receive these facts, and you need go no farther with them. Appropriation is all in such cases. There is no necessary after process of assimilation. They are of themselves nourishment for the mind, without any such after process.

But not so is it with *moral truth*, — that truth designed to regulate and govern human action. This is worth nothing, unless it is wrought into the life; unless it be so assimilated as to lose the form of abstract truth, and become principle; unless it passes into, is converted into life.

This is the way with bread, when it does any good. It does not remain bread. It turns to flesh and blood and bone. It is converted into nerve force and muscular energy; into heart beats and hand movements, into the far-sightedness of a Herschel, into the beneficent activities of a Howard, — in a word, into human life. The bread of yesterday is the myriad-hued, the myriad-sided life of to-day. It is the eloquence of the orator, and the strength of the drayman. It is the skill of the artist, and the energy of the ploughman. And it is all this, through the wonderful process of assimilation, through the mysterious force of a transubstantiation, stranger than priest ever taught, or poet ever fancied.

Now, the truth of this analogy furnishes an explanation of the fact that so many persons in the world

have a great deal of Bible knowledge, an abundance of moral truth, without having much of spiritual life. In such cases, truth has remained truth. Doctrine lies within them, as so much doctrine. They have received moral truth, just as I said you might receive the facts of the material world. "Heat results from motion," the teacher says. "Well, I have that," responds the scholar; "heat results from motion." What next? "Christ died to save sinners; faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace," continues the teacher. "Yes, I hear," replies the scholar, "Christ died to save sinners; faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace." So moral truth remains as so much unassimilated knowledge in the minds of thousands.

They are like persons who have eaten a great deal, but who, from natural infirmity or from disobedience of the known laws of the physical life, have digested little. It had been better for them morally, if they had received less of moral truth; for unused, unassimilated truth, like undigested food, ever lies heavy on the life which has taken it. Almost every man consumes enough of the raw material to make him healthy and strong, provided only he turned it into nutriment. So, we all have enough of truth, as truth, of doctrine, as doctrine, if it were only used, if it were only converted into life. We have the bread; and what is wanted, and all that is wanted, is, that it shall be made the bread of life.

And this analogy, besides an explanation, suggests also the great duty we owe to our moral or spiritual being. It is this. The duty *of assimilating the moral*

truth which we have received, of turning it into life. This should be our daily work. Our creed should be unto us a life-regulating power, a perpetual fountain of motion and action, of hope and of fear, of joy and of sorrow. Is *time* nothing, and *eternity* every thing? Do we believe this? Then we should be more careful for an estate *there*, than for building up one *here*. Is it true, that without holiness no one shall see the Lord? Do we believe this? If so, how important that this truth should be turned into a principle of action in our daily life.

And we should come to place very little, if any, value upon *the mere possession of truth.* This never saved any one. It is as valueless to the life of the soul, as bread is in the stomach of the dying man. Many a *post mortem* examination discloses plenty of unused food within the body. Still, the man died,—died, because his system did not take up and use the bread. So, many a *post mortem* moral examination, no doubt, will exhibit an abundance of moral truth in the soul. The conclusion will be the same. Material of spiritual life unused, unassimilated. "The man knew his duty, but did it not."

And farther than this I think we should go here. We should come *to place comparatively little value upon doctrines, which we are unable to convert into life-force,* from which we cannot gather spiritual guidance and strength. If the truth which we possess is not digestible, it is very poor stuff.

The spent laborer, at the close of his long day's work, crosses the threshold of his house, hungry. If

now, instead of food, you meet him with the proffer of good air, even an abundance of it, you do but mock the hungry man. What he needs is something to eat. Milk, give him this, if you have not meat; any thing out of which he can get life. But a greater mockery of human need than this is it, when a man, bending under heavy burdens, harassed by a thousand cares, solicited by countless temptations, when the human life of sorrow and of sin asks for bread, for spiritual food, and is met only with a philosophical discussion, or an obsolete dogma, out of which the nourishing juices evaporated centuries ago.

And a more sorry sight still it is, when the human life of its own free will, and with most eager hands, reaches out and draws unto itself, with a most self-satisfied and complacent air, that from which it can get no nourishment. Poor human soul! needing bread, and yet sitting down contented upon a pile of stones, hugging these. And it is to be feared that very many professors of religion are doing this very thing; some of them ignorantly, but some of them wilfully ignorant.

But, without further amplification here, I ask your attention to the great matter suggested by the text, —

THE CONDITIONS OF SPIRITUAL ASSIMILATION.

And the first I mention is, *something to be assimilated.* The process denoted by this word is only the changing of one substance into another. Thus, the tree takes the air and the sunlight and the rain, and turns them into tree, into roots and trunk, branches and fruit, into its own peculiar life. Every leaf on

your vine in spring-time is an open mouth, asking for these surrounding substances, that it may convert them into life for itself. It does not want light and heat and moisture, as such. It does not lay them up as such, counting them treasures. No, but silently, surely, swiftly, it assimilates them to itself.

The sunbeam, when your flower gets hold of it, is no longer a sunbeam. No; but it is blood in the veins of your rose, it is the blush upon its cheek, it is sweet odor filling the air. Now, cut off your flower from its commissariat, refuse the mouth which it opens, rudely strike back the hand which it reaches out, and what is the result? Why, death; what we call death. The life of the flower ceases, because it has nothing out of which to construct this life. So, the wall stops when the bricks give out. So, the web ceases when the weaver no longer has that which he can work into the growing pattern.

Now, not otherwise is it with the life of the soul. This life, like all others, grows by the process of assimilation. But there must be something to be assimilated; and what this something is the text distinctly affirms. *It is Christ, who is the bread of life, the bread which is turned into life within the soul.* Christ, and not something else; not philosophy, not art, not knowledge. Where in the history of the world has any of these supported moral life? Look at ancient Egypt, ancient Greece. Their philosophy is good in the world to-day; so is their art; so is their knowledge: yet they died morally; they retrograded spiritually. Feeding upon these, as their only moral

food, they starved. Look, too, at France, in her age of reason. Why, she ran mad, she demonized and fell, a suicide in a deluge of blood.

No, my hearers, the history of the world proves it. Neither philosophy nor art can grow the food which shall nourish the life of the soul. Christ, not something else, but the true Christ, is needed for this. Sawdust may be made up into the form of biscuit, but the body will starve on such bread. So is it with the soul. Christ is its food; but this means the *true* Christ, and a *whole* Christ.

Let a man stand between the spiritual life and the cross, calling himself Pope, measuring a half Christ out to men, and what is the result? Look at it in the Papal states. Behold it in Spain. See it in Mexico. Superstition, immorality, idolatry, moral death. The soul cannot live on the Pope, or what of Christ may come through the Pope. It needs a whole Christ.

Then, again, take the case where Christ is shorn of His sympathy, of His boundless love, of His ineffable yearning, and the same result is apparent. The soul starves. Its bread again is only half bread. *The legal substitute*, making His way to the cross, with the sins of a chosen few upon His head. This is but half truth, and half truth is often worse than error. And I tell you, my hearers, that souls are starving on this food. Starving in our own day, in our own land, in our Orthodox churches.

Then there is another half Christ, *the sentimental one.* And he, too, is preached from many a so-called pulpit in our own land. A Christ who is no sin-

bearer, who holds no relation to the divine law as its atonement, — a Christ, of whom it can, only by the widest possible metaphor, be said, that He was made a curse, — a Christ with no blood! And the same sad result of spiritual life is here again witnessed. Souls are starved. Sin becomes an obsolete word, and sentimentality and gush are all of Christian life, — a sentimentality and gush which makes every man a law unto himself; and which, in a rhapsody of lawless liberty, can take hold of the vilest acts.

He who is the Bread of Life is not so lifted up as to draw men, or to satisfy them when they are drawn. The soul, your soul and mine, must have Christ, — Christ, as He is in the Gospel, — Christ, with His divine sympathy, with His hopeful and exhaustless love, — Christ, as He stands with open arms, crying out unto all the weary, sinful, suffering, dying children of men, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," — Christ, as He went to the cross, a true sacrifice, bearing the sins of the world, — such a Christ, as prophet, priest, and king, — such a Christ as leader, friend, brother, saviour. He it is who is the bread of life. Let our souls have Him, and we shall live and not die. The first condition, then, of spiritual assimilation is, that the moral life have something to assimilate, some bread; and this bread is Christ.

The second condition is *a good moral atmosphere.* This implies two things. First, that your homes should be favorable to Christian life; and second, that your daily business, outside the home, should be such and so conducted as to be the same. No church,

no religious privileges, can do much for any man or woman, who either has no home, or whose home is a bad one. Why, suppose you only gave your body one or two hours a week of pure atmosphere. Could you preserve health? Could you live? Why, no. In such a case, no matter how much food you might take, you would sicken and die.

So of spiritual food and growth. If you go from the church into an atmosphere of frivolity and selfishness, of acrimony and impurity, you will be sure to arrest the process of spiritual assimilation. Just as it is in the physical world. Let a man have a good meal, let him eat ever so heartily, and then step from the dining-room into a room full of carbonic-acid gas. Of what service, in such a case, is the food which the man has taken? None at all. He might as well have taken not a morsel. His presence in the foul room arrests digestion, and prevents all benefit from the food taken by him.

My hearers, I am not giving you here a sort of rationalistic spiritual hygiene. The Bible is full of the idea which I am enforcing. You remember how it was in the Jewish church. The touch of the unclean one made the toucher ceremoniously unclean. And this was only symbolic of truth which is the same to-day. All around us, there are those whom to touch socially, or in business, or in politics, is sure defilement. No one can breathe in their presence without inhaling moral poison. They are spiritual lepers, who ought to be compelled, wherever they go, as were the lepers of old, to cry out, "Unclean! un-

clean!" so that all good people should get out of the way. And yet, those who call themselves Christians make bosom companions out of such, stand in rings with them. "Come ye out from among them; touch not the unclean thing," is the voice of the Bible unto all such; and it is also the voice of common prudence as well.

"Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers," is another Bible warning here. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" is another. The very Church itself is founded upon the necessity of Christian association for the Christian life. Arrange then, I beseech you, you who would be saved, this all-important condition of spiritual safety and growth. The home is more to you than the Church. Scolding there will do more than preaching here. Falseness, selfishness, baseness there will form an atmosphere which shall surely poison your life.

So is it of the world, which is only a wider home. Unless your calling is an honest one and honestly conducted, you will surely sacrifice your soul's life. There are some kinds of business in this world — such as working in poisons, where the deadly fumes must be continually inhaled — which are known to shorten life by so many years. Men work at these callings because they must have bread. But they don't so work except at a high price. But what is the price that shall compensate you for entering into any association where the life of conscience shall be strangled? Can you make money rapidly in such associations; can you get office through them? "What shall it

profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Purify, then, the atmosphere around you. Keep out of that which is impure. Don't handle other people's money, except as a matter of duty. Don't offer yourself as almoner of the government appropriation to the poor Indian, except conscience bid you. Shun evil and corrupt association. It is said that the Upas-tree is girt in with a circle of dead and rotting carcasses of bird and beast. So, upon every side of these corrupt rings, are strewn the dead consciences, the lost souls of men. See to it then, my hearers, that you breathe the atmosphere of love and of kindness, of purity and of honesty, day by day. There are atmospheres in which you cannot carry a lighted candle. So, there are numberless atmospheres in which you cannot carry the light of a pure heart and a loving soul.

The third condition of spiritual assimilation is *activity, the exercise of the new and true life.* No matter how good the food the physical man may have, or how pure is the atmosphere which he breathes, if, when filled and in this atmosphere, he sits as the stuffed and idle toad, he cannot come unto the fulness of bodily health and strength. So it is with the spiritual man. Life here also is developed by its appropriate activity. Duty is a divine and immutable condition of moral growth. "He that saveth his life shall lose it."

Selfish idleness will kill any soul. Something you must do for this world in which you live, if you would

do the best for yourself. You may work with your needle, or you may give of your money, or you may perform acts of kindness and of love, in any one of a hundred ways; but some work of salvation you must do, or your moral life will stagnate, and you shall fall into and perish in the pit of your own selfishness. "To do good and to communicate, forget not." Exercise for the new life you must have, or all the doctrines in the world will not keep your soul alive.

A fourth condition of spiritual assimilation is *thought, intelligence.* Whether these things are so, was the question with the Bereans, and for this they were praised. And another clear direction is, "Meditate upon these things." Still another is, "Prove all things." So we need to do with the truths which we possess. We need to look into them, to meditate upon them, to put an interrogation-point after them and erase it not until they are proved, until they take the shape of intelligent convictions within our minds.

"Whether these things are so?" I tell you, my hearers, that our moral being cannot be better employed than in just asking and answering this question, "Whether these things are so?" or whether some man of like passions with ourselves uttered them in the heat of a controversy centuries ago.

> "There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds."

Better believe half of what you do, intelligently, with your whole soul, than believe it all, languidly, igno-

rantly, as a churchman. Better throw away half your creed, and get something which shall be as the very anchor of your soul.

I can imagine a ship going to sea with her decks covered with bolts and bars of iron, and yet with no iron fluke with which to take hold of the unmoving bottom, when the storm breaks and the waves roll. So, many Christians are upon the sea of life. The head and mind are full of the catechism, questions and answers, yet are they without a faith which they can use in the hour of need. When the tempest blows they have no anchor which entereth into that within the veil; none with which they can grapple reality; none by which they can bind themselves to the unmoving throne of truth and righteousness.

The last condition of spiritual assimilation which I mention, and the great one, is *the presence of the vital principle*, — the vital principle which philosophy cannot find out, which chemistry cannot detect. See those two trees. One of them lifts up its bare and shrunken branches; the other is covered with leaves, and the birds sing among its branches. Yet the air, the sunshine, the moisture, all within reach of both of these trees. What makes the difference? Why, in one the vital principle is present, from the other it has departed.

Look into an earthly home. Still, rigid, cold, lies one of its members; speaking, acting, full of life, moves another. Yet is that home not without food. Ay, not without food; but of what use is food to a dead man? Let wine be poured down his throat,

does he revive? Let bread be given, is he strengthened? Ah, no! for the vital principle has departed.

Take two members of the same family again. One stands before the cross, only to fall in worship. The other hunts through the soil, wet with the blood of the Saviour, for gold, and lifts up his face to blaspheme, when he finds it not. The cross is life to the one, but death remains in the case of the other.

Now turn to the Bible. Is it not plain that the disciples, before the day of Pentecost, failed to appreciate Christ, that their moral natures fed not upon Him? And is it not just as plain, that after Pentecost he was to them the bread of life? What made the difference? What was Pentecost to moral life? Only this. Down the shining slope of that day, came the power of the divine Spirit, the vital principle.

But do you say, here then is the prime condition of spiritual growth, a supernatural one, which I cannot supply. Not so, not so at all. Listen to these words, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." So, producible by you is this condition of moral assimilation and growth, just as much so as any which I have mentioned.

Two or three remarks in conclusion. *First:* it is Christ, who is the Bread of Life, — not the Church, not the sacraments, not truth, not doctrines; but Christ, the personal Christ. We are in the Church; so far, so good. But are we in the Church, because we followed Christ into it? Do we remain in it, be-

cause we remain near to Him? We have our doctrines: have we a Saviour? We are Orthodox; but are we pure and good and Christlike?

Secondly: Christ being the Bread of Life, character becomes a good test of the soundness of faith. Figs do not grow upon thistles. A true and beautiful life is not the fruit of an unsound and false belief. He who has life, who has strength, who can walk, run, wrestle, such a one must have eaten. So he who is pure, who is Christlike in conduct, must have partaken of Him who is the only bread of such a life.

Thirdly: many of us are daily guilty in this matter. We transgress, year after year, the plainest laws of spiritual health and of moral growth. We take care of our bodily health, we arrange for our intelligent culture; but there are many of us who take little care to see that the circumstances of our daily life are favorable to the growth of purity and goodness and Christ-likeness in the heart. And this is our mistake, our guilt, at which we shall wonder one day; wonder that we could expose our character to all manner of malign and deadly influences, and this, too, while we could not go unto a fever patient without alarm.

My hearers, I beg of you to think more of the conditions of moral safety and growth in this world. I beg of you to believe that this is a matter wider than Sunday or the Church, and one worthy of your most careful and constant thought.

V.

THE MODE OF THE SPIRIT.

"THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS IN ALL GOODNESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS AND TRUTH." — Eph. v. 9.

OVER all, above all, and for evermore, is Fatherly love brooding over this sad world of sin and of suffering. Our world has not been, and it shall never be, without a Divine Father.

Radiant still is the pathway along which the Son of God, the Divine Saviour of mankind, rising up from Joseph's tomb walked forward into the eternities. Loving as He was when He hung upon the cross, powerful as He was when he burst the bands of the grave, so fully and so truly human as when He lay upon Mary's bosom, or upon His own received the head of the loving disciple, is Jesus of Nazareth, who has gone before us, gone to prepare a place for us.

Sadly to-day as ever, I see it, the great stream of humanity pushing itself forward, emptying itself into the dark gulf which embosoms the island of time. Groans and tears, sins and sorrows, cares and wearinesses, moral deformity and physical suffering, — an awful volume of sad, misshapen, unfulfilled life, daily disappears in the shadows. And farther we cannot follow it.

But of this we are assured. On high, impelling, guiding, drawing unto themselves this vast and ever-increasing tide of human life, stand clasped hand in hand the Infinite Father and the Saviour Son. And so we must believe, that in the end, far off it may be, nothing of man, nothing of his possible growth and joy and glory shall plunge downward, which infinite love may lift upward.

And yet is God nearer to human need, even than this. He not only stands in the skies, but breathes, as the air of heaven, throughout the earth. In the heart of the Church, in the heart of the individual Christian, in the heart of every man, is the Divine Spirit, striving with that man to save him from that which is evil, to help him unto that which is good.

There is a special presence of Deity in the world to-day, as truly as when Jesus walked the earth. This is the presence of the Holy Spirit, who has taken Christ's place, who is opening up, unrolling the fulness of the Gospel, and with divine skill working it into the warp of this world's sore necessity.

My subject is, THE RELATION OF THIS SPIRIT TO THE MORAL NECESSITY OF MAN.

And first this truth: *The Spirit helps in the direction, and along the line of morality.* The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; that is, the fruitage of the Spirit in man is of this kind. The way He tells upon men is to make them good and righteous and truthful. He helps men along the path of these moral qualities in the direction of a purer, sounder, better, sweeter life day by day.

The rain comes down upon the earth, the sunlight falls upon it; and to what end? In what do they appear? In what do they have their fruitage? Why, in living Nature, — in waving fields and billowy forests, in fragrant flowers and golden grain, in Nature helped on to her natural and beautiful end. So, the Divine Spirit falls upon human nature, and fruits in what? In righteousness, in goodness, in truth, — in a new man, in a better man, in a man helped in the direction of a beautiful and perfect morality. God's natural rain has its end in life. So, the gracious rain of His Spirit has its end, not in belief, not in visions, not in happiness, but in a good life, — a life blessing the world, and reaching up unto Christ Jesus.

I know this has not always been the representation of the subject. Religious teachers have to a very great extent sought for evidence of the Spirit's presence in the emotions, overlooking totally the sphere of conduct and of character. And yet, why this should have been the rule, I never could see. Take *truth*, — this is no mere outburst of feeling, yet is it a fruit of the Spirit, and is so called. Take *righteousness*, — this is not ecstasy, yet is it a fruit of the Spirit, and so called. Take *temperance*, — this is not emotion, and yet is it a fruit of the Spirit. Why, then, should the Holy Spirit be thought to exercise His divine influence upon the emotions alone?

Surely, this is a wrong view of this great matter, and one, too, which has done great harm. In the first place, it has belittled religion in the eyes of many

thoughtful men. And, in the second place, it has time and again sent the ardent churchman, fresh from the sanctuary, unto falsehood on the street, and unrighteousness in the office and the store, unto a worldliness wholly irreligious, and which, commencing on Monday morning, abated not till Saturday evening.

Do you ask, "Is there then no mystery in the operation of the Spirit?" I reply, Yes, enough to please any species of theologians; but it does not lie where very many lodge it. There is no mystery in the end to which the Spirit reaches in and through man; but there is very much of mystery in His reaching unto this end.

When our soldiers enter a fort, we know what flag they will run up. So, when the Holy Spirit enters the citadel of the human heart, we know what colors He will lift up. He will elevate the standard of morality; He will fling out before the eyes of the world the banner upon which are written the words, Goodness, Righteousness, Truth. But the mystery is in His entrance to the human heart, — in His penetrating to the fountain of the will. The mystery is in His mingling inseparably with the spirit of a man.

So food enters the human body, and we know what its end will be. It will be flesh and blood, it will be bone and muscle, it will be the strength, the activity of the physical man. And yet physical life still remains an unsolved problem. By what path is it that this dead material runs along until it receives a soul, until it quivers with the life of a Plato or a Paul? Ah! here is mystery into which the eye of philoso-

phy looks to-day, as though it looked into darkness itself.

So of the matter before us. It is certain that the end, the fruit of the Holy Spirit in man, will always be goodness of life, righteousness of conduct. But as to the manner in which He produces these results, of this we affirm nothing. Here we bow our heads in confessed ignorance, and only say, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

I pass on now to a second truth. The Spirit in His mission *perfectly identifies Himself with the spirit and faculties of man.* He produces nothing of moral result in man, so that this result lies in human nature unrelated to the faculties of this nature, and as the work of a separate and external agent.

There is, no doubt, much within each of you to-day which is directly owing to the influence of another life upon yours. But this fact does not prevent your inner self from being most truly your own. As you look within yourself from time to time, it never occurs to you that you are simply a piece of mosaic put together by other hands, — something without unity, and to which you have no title.

Regarding your purity you do not say, "Yes, that is Mr. A, in me;" or your honesty, "That is Mr. B's work and property." I say, no one ever thinks of making such an inventory of his inner being. This he is sure of, and it is a fact, — he belongs to himself. He has made himself. Influences he has felt; but he

has received these influences into himself, nourished them with his own life-blood, and through his own nature led them upward into fruit. So true is this that you could not, if you were asked to do so, say what portion or trait of your present character has been produced by your nearest friend.

And so is it in the approach and converse of the Divine Spirit with the spirit of a man. It is the approach and converse of one person with another. On both sides is personality, on both sides is free will. And when the fruit of this union ripens, it is not one person's work, not one person's property in another; but it is character truly and fully belonging to the one in whom it had its birth.

Why, look within you. The truth which lies within your heart, is it not yours? Do you not know that it is yours? Have you not longed for it? Have you not worked for it? Has not your blood nourished it? Does it not nourish it still? Is it not as much your own as is the cunning of your hand, the strength of your muscle, or the action of your brain? Indeed, is not your inner man as truly your own property as your outer man? Surely it is. And this illustrates the truth, that the Holy Spirit, in His mission, fully identifies Himself with the human spirit and faculties.

He does not use men as we use vessels or magazines. But the law of His intercourse with them is the law of personal influence. And it follows from this, that there is no possibility of a man being better than he knows of. If you are not daily conscious of

feeling something divine within you, why then and most surely, nothing divine is growing within you. Unless your own hand is cultivating Christian character, rest assured that no other hand is doing this for you. Truth is not increasing within you, unless through the purpose and painstaking of your daily life.

So of righteousness, so of goodness. All these are human attributes. Every increment of them is an increment to the moral stature of man, and it comes as the cubit to the bodily stature comes, through the intelligent and continuous use of means by the human agent. These fruits of the Spirit are not so many abstract qualities, stored away in human nature under the cover of imputed righteousness, ready for the muster of the Judgment Day. They are all so much human character which men have chosen, for which they have striven, unto which they have attained.

My hearers, as I said before, I pretend not to explain the congress of the Divine and the human spirit. But this is sure. He, the Divine agent, perfectly identifies Himself with the nature into which He comes. He does not remain in that nature a second, alien, recognizable force. He hides Himself behind the powers of man. He works only through these powers. The only sign and proof of His activity is human activity, for He works within man that which is human, not that which is divine.

And so, because He works through you and not simply in you, you will always be able to know when He is doing His work for you ; and, at last, you will

find the sum-total of your spiritual wealth to be that, and that only, which, with your own hands, you have earned and laid up in store. Yes, with your own hands. I know that the force which moves them is not your own. Neither is that which strings the muscles of your body. But these muscles are your own. They do your bidding. So of the hands of your soul; with which, if ever you are to possess them, you must reach out for goodness and righteousness and truth. These are human qualities. They are also the fruit of the Spirit.

But once more, and a third truth. The results of the Spirit are always *in perfect harmony with the individuality of man.* Identified in His activity with the powers and faculties of the human soul, the results of His presence in the soul are ever in the line of personal development, always in harmony with that unique assemblage of faculty, force, tendency, to which we give the name of *personality.*

By this, it is not meant that men are not greatly changed through and by the Spirit's work. They are so changed; but each is changed so as not to disturb the peculiar balance, shaping, likeness of the individual. Peter grew, changed, ripened under Christ, but still was Peter. Divine grace did its work for him without trenching upon his individuality. So with John. The Spirit's work for him was only the filling up with grace of that sweet vessel which men called John. The vessel remained unchanged. Individuality was sanctified, not sacrificed. The stream of personal being was widened, deepened,

purified, but still was led forward with perfect continuity.

And here I bring before you this truth for its practical worth. It is profitable for instruction. Many a person has entered upon the religious life, saying, as he did so, "Now I am done with the peculiar violence of that besetting sin: my conversion puts that behind me." But he is not done with it. The Spirit does not at first or at once neutralize the vicious, the demon impulses of corrupted blood. Moral suicidal tendencies are inherited as truly as physical. The coroner's jury brings in the verdict, "Suicide by hanging." The community listens and says: "His father did the same before him." The community pauses, and again says: "It must run in the blood." And it does. The man was born into the world with his hand clutching his own throat.

Look at the godless lives which fill the cesspools of your city. In the great majority of cases, their parents were such before them. All that many of them inherited, morally, was blood that burned, and an impulse hell-ward. So according to the Divine Word, and by an immutable law, the iniquities of the father are visited upon the son. So it happens that one sinner destroyeth much good. So are all the evil bound together in a horrid sodality for ever.

And now, when the Spirit comes unto such an inthralled wretch, He comes not to place him on a level with the pure man, who stands upon the summit built up by generations of holy lives. This would be to smite law in the face, — to pour contempt upon

righteousness. But the Spirit comes to such a one, bringing, bearing with Him, the possibility of victory. He comes, and, as he enters the human heart, He exclaims: "Fearful as are the odds against you, God is for you, and you may overcome. Victory, victory over yourself, which shall send a thrill of joy through highest Heaven, — this is within your reach, this you may have!"

So it is throughout all the sphere of moral regeneration. The Spirit does not trench upon individuality, neither does He at once destroy the inertia of character already formed. If a man has been going down-hill before he accepted the Divine Spirit, — and what man has not? — why then his path must be up-hill from that moment. How can it be otherwise?

Suppose a man, in the presence of human want and the cross of the self-giving Saviour, has been for years miserly clutching all his gains, both well-gotten and ill-gotten. Is there not a fearful inertia in the set which such fingers get? Has not such sin a penalty which must be wrought out, which the sinner must work out through tears and groans and blood? Ay, this is the only way he can be taught the fearful inertia of sin. This is the only way in which man can be redeemed without dishonor to the nobility of his free will. The only background, this, upon which the splendor of Divine justice may reveal itself to mortal eyes.

My hearers, true it is, as that God made and governs you, that you must suffer for your sin. Although your soul be saved, yet must you suffer. The lust

which you now hide in your heart, which you now gloat over, shall leave you, if ever it is expelled, as a red-hot ball, searing, scorching, burning its pathway outward. You hang now the walls of your soul full of vile things, thinking little of it. But I tell you, long after you have wished them gone, long after your own hands have removed them, their ghosts will glare upon you, to startle and terrify your struggling spirit.

An impure man does not become pure at once. A tricky, slippery, dishonest politician is not at once changed into an honest man. The Divine Spirit performs no such miracles, works no such magic, treats men in no such machine-way. He never dishonors the grand glory of virtue and of a virtuous life. He writes *expiation* upon the cross, but He also writes it upon the human life. He shows to many a man no other path to Heaven, save the one which is arched with these words, "Resisting unto blood."

Learn, then, the conclusion of this matter. The Spirit does not and will not save you by changing you into somebody else. He does not neutralize and destroy the sinful passions which you have been cherishing. No; but He comes as a Divine friend to save you from them by inspiring, by supporting, by crowning with victory, the fight which you make with your sinful and ugly self.

As such, I pray you, receive Him. As such, I beseech you, bid him enter into your heart. Henceforth, make loyalty to Him the supreme law of your being. And so sure as God has, through the cross, wrested victory from sin, so surely shall you stand up,

upon this earth, and day by day lift your life upward, lift it upward until angels shall sing it welcome, and God, almighty and all-loving, fold it in His everlasting embrace.

Let us draw from this subject, my hearers, these encouraging and practical truths. *First:* there is hope, there is the possibility of moral victory, for every man. I believe that corrupt blood runs down the generations. I believe and I know that there are inherited passions and impulses fearfully strong for evil in many a human life. I believe, and am persuaded, that every thing else is against some men, except Infinite love, except the Divine Spirit, except God. But upon every man's side, as Divine and Almighty friend, God stands; and this means for every man *a chance,* this means for every one of us *the possibility of victory.*

In the drifting sands of the vilest heart, the Spirit is able and willing to bring forth the fruits of *goodness* and *righteousness* and *truth.* There is hope, then, for us all. Look, I pray you, my hearers, unto this *hope,* for it is your only one. Men are daily going to pieces around you. Moral shipwreck is as common as financial ruin. You are weak. There is no help for you, but in God. There is no hope for you but in God. One passion or another will surely murder your immortal soul, unless Divine love takes you to its bosom, unless Divine power defends you.

And this Divine love, this Divine power, how near they are to you! As near to you, as is the great ocean to the island which it surrounds, ready to rush

into every open door of your heart. "Behold, I stand at the door." Ay, nearer still. As near to you as are the gifts of parents unto the children whom they love. "If ye then being evil, know how to give gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

Secondly: we gather from this subject the necessity of human co-operation in the salvation of the human life. God did not wait for men to ask His love. No; but he gave it, as He gave the sunlight in the great beginning. Christ did not wait for men to ask for His death. But He went to the cross impelled only by His most wonderful love. The Holy Spirit, too, has not waited for your request, but of His own free will has come unto you.

What now? God has loved you; Jesus has died for you; the Holy Spirit has presented Himself at the door of your heart. What now? Are you saved? Oh, no! All must stop here; all these wonderful movements of Divinity towards you, all these wonderful outlays of Divinity upon you, must go for nothing, — unless, unless your penitent soul replies: "Father, love me still;" "Jesus, Saviour, have mercy;" "Blessed Spirit, help."

So near has salvation been brought to you; so absolutely necessary is action on your part now. And oh, think of it, I pray you, the great guilt, the withering shame, of those who shall awake in eternity to find that they have destroyed themselves! And that, too, in a world over which an Infinite Father

bends, — upon which, red with sacrificial blood, stands the cross of the Saviour, — and through which, as the air of Heaven, moves the ever-blessed Spirit.

One word more, as the conclusion of this mighty theme. It is the teaching of Scripture, that there is a limit beyond which the needful help of the Spirit is impossible to man. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."

"There is a line, by us unseen,
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God's patience and his wrath."

The substance of this truth seems to be this. A certain amount of moral obliquity, a certain fearful piling up of known evil and conscious disobedience in the human soul, crowds out of the soul for ever all sense of the need of God, and, with this sense, all help from God, and all hope of salvation.

But, my hearers, I have no heart, no desire, to enlarge upon this truth. God knows it is sad enough and awful enough just as it stands.

"Oh, where is this mysterious bourne,
By which our path is crossed;
Beyond which, God Himself hath sworn,
That he who goes, is lost!"

Where, O Divine Spirit, is the line across which thou canst not follow the needy and sinful soul? Where, oh where, is that point beyond which Infinite Power, Infinite Love, Infinite Patience may not go with a man?

In anguish for our unsaved friends, we lift our faces to the sky, and cry: "Where, oh where, is *the dead-line of the immortal soul!*" And, while we listen, for reply come only these words: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;" "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

VI.

THE HIDDEN LIFE.

"And your life is hid with Christ in God." — Col. iii. 3.

TWO general remarks. First: to hide the life with Christ is to hide it in God. Your life is hid *with Christ* in God. Secondly: the word "hid" in the text is metaphorical for faith. To hide the life with Christ is by faith to commit it unto His keeping. But the metaphor of the "hidden life" is strong and beautiful, and so let us retain it in our present consideration of the text.

All life, of all kinds and in all stages, is more or less hidden. It is so *in its source.* This is hidden from human eyes. Men, the wisest among them, stand gazing upon the stream of life to-day, as for centuries geographers stood gazing upon the great river of Egypt. They see its currents as they pour themselves along; they can mark its course; they can note its termination: but its beginning they cannot see. It flows in upon their view from an unknown fountain.

How diligently for centuries have physiologists searched for this fountain in the human system! Now, along the nerves, as, quivering with life, they dart throughout the body, or coil themselves in folds

within the brain. Now, along the arteries, they have sailed from the heart to the remotest part of the body; thence back again on the venous current: still no fountain, no mysterious spring from which the life bubbles up, no inner sanctuary where the life begins to be in the sight of the human eye.

And this is true of all kinds of life, of vegetable and of animal, of mental as truly as of bodily, and of spiritual life as truly as of either of its kindred forms. In all cases, the fountain of life is a hidden one. The most we can say is, that a river of life flows forth from the throne of God and the Lamb, — an unceasing, wonderful, world-filling stream.

The *development of life* is also hidden. "Thou knowest not how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child." So declared the wise man thirty centuries ago. And, if he were to-day alive, he might speak unto the proudest philosopher of the earth in the same words, "Thou knowest not." Many hidden things have been searched out since the day of Solomon, but this is one thing which has not been uncovered, — this process of growth, this mysterious development of life. It is still hidden.

You drop a seed from your hand into the ground, and it grows. The germ of life which you planted unfolds itself; and, standing by, you can note and mark the process, you can name some of the elements of power which have a hand in this process. But this is all that you can do. Beyond this, the development of life is as hidden from the eyes of man as it was in the day that the Lord God formed the herb, whose seed was in itself after its kind.

So, the prodigal in a strange land, passing by the door of the church, pauses to listen. The words of the old familiar hymn fall upon his ears. He hears the congregation within singing the lines :—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

And while he listens, the tears flow ; new and strange desires arise within his heart, and a new life springs up ; springs up to grow stronger and stronger, to rise higher and higher, until it is fitted for the company of angels and of God. Who can explain the development of such a life ? No one but the Spirit of God, who breatheth where He listeth, and whose breath is the life of the soul.

Then life, *as a result*, is hidden. Life, as you have it, with its cares and aims and hopes and fears ; life, as you have grown it within your heart, as it is there to-day. What one around you looks in upon this ? Is it not hidden ? — hidden from your dearest friend, from your nearest relative ? Is it not a secret between you and God ? What one around you scans the secret workings of your desire and will ? What human eyes have ever penetrated the inner sanctuary of your being, where your true self holds its all fateful interviews with good and evil ? No : each one of us holds his life a secret from all others. The heart knoweth its own bitterness. It also knoweth its own sweetness and goodness, and in either case the stranger intermeddleth not.

May these remarks upon the mystery of life in

general, prepare you in some degree for the consideration of that *life* which is hid with Christ in God.

That life, I remark first, is hidden from *the pursuing sentence of the Divine Law.* All law which is worthy the name is engaged in an eternal quest for the wrong-doer, for the life which has violated its demands. You may see this illustrated on the lowest level. Take the case of the man who violates the law of health. He may do this in either of two ways, — by overwork, or by over-indulgence of appetite. It matters not. So soon as the law is broken, armed with its sentence of condemnation, it starts in pursuit of the criminal.

And now behold the victim in his attempts to elude pursuit. Now, he flies from his native land, across wide seas. Now, he calls in the aid of the physician to shelter him from his pursuer. Then, again, he throws from his shoulders a part of the heavy load which he has been carrying, thinking to hide behind this. And so, in these various ways, the criminal escapes for a time the vengeance of the pursuing law.

His guilty life hides itself, it may be, for many days. But the day of its discovery hastens apace. Law has a sharp eye, and it tires not day nor night. Sooner or later, it is sure to come up to its victim, and drag him forth from his hiding-place. The violator of law must meet the sentence of law. For the intemperate man, waits the trembling nerve, the crazy brain. For the overworked man, comes the day of weakness, when thought no longer holds together, and will and pur-

pose totter on their thrones. The violator of law can hide but for a short period. Onward and still onward, as certain and as resistless as destiny, comes the outraged law.

Take this other law, "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." It has a sphere wide as human activity, an application wherever there is a human life. It conditions all progress, all success. And it is violated in a hundred ways. The lawyer trusts to his smartness, and prepares not his case. The physician closes his books, and, what is worse, sometimes his eyes. The minister escapes from the hard work of sermon-making, and trusts to the inspiration of the Spirit. The man of ease lies abed of mornings, and allows his business to take care of itself. The young man who ought to be bearing the yoke in his youth, clothed in fine attire sits yawningly at his desk for six hours out of the twenty-four.

And all these escape for a time. They hide their life. The congregation says of the exhorter, "How fluently he speaks." The lawyer is praised for his brilliancy. The indolent doctor makes some astonishing cures. The fast young man has his day when he shines in the German, and sets the fashion to the street. So, I see all these hiding from the vengeance of a law which is pursuing, and which is as inexorable as death.

But onward comes the law, as full of eyes and wings as Ezekiel's vision, and the hidden culprits one after another are dragged forth. And now I look again, and behold a tombstone in place of the tailor's mani-

kin. I see the exhorter without a congregation, the quack without a patient, the lawyer without a client, and the business man stranded upon the reef of some poor clerkship. The law has found its victims, dragged forth their hidden lives, inflicted its sentence.

And as in the physical realm, so in the moral realm. The law of God is in continual search for the transgressor. Here, too, men hide for a time. The man who uses God's day as his own, without once turning his eyes upward to Him who gives him all his days, — why, he prospers. He grows richer and richer continually, so that men marvel, and exclaim, "What a wonderful man! See how he adds house to house, farm to farm, business to business." And all this time the man imagines himself hidden from the pursuit of God's law. He conceives that he has eluded its vigilance. He is almost proud to believe that by his superior force he has made himself an exception in the moral world.

So I see him go forward, until very suddenly Death blocks up his way. And now he is at bay. Death is before him, and behind him, on his track, is the law of God which he has violated. And how pitiless is the dragging forth of the life which he imagined hidden! Out of the stuff which he has heaped around him, out of his increased riches, the hand of the outraged law drags him, and, in a remorse which strikes its fangs into the very vitals of the soul, inflicts its sentence.

Take a more general case. The Cross is before the man, — God's law of life and salvation. Yet the man will not lift his eyes to it. In its very presence, he

restrains prayer. In its very presence, he profanes the name of the God who made him. In its very presence, and with its crimson drops falling upon him, he gives himself to gold, to ambition, to pleasure; as though these things were the chief, the only care of an immortal soul.

And his life seems hidden. No lightning leaps from the outraged Cross to scorch and scarify it. Its drops of blood turn not to drops of fire upon his head. Every thing is smooth and pleasant. The Almighty Father, above the cross of His dear Son, beholds, but keeps silence. So days pass away, and years. Youth gives place to manhood, and old age follows on, and still the neglected Cross rises silent and patient before the impenitent life.

But now a change comes. Human desire fails. Human strength comes unto its end. And now the man, done with earth, raises his eyes towards that Saviour who alone can guide him to heaven. But alas! alas! these eyes are blind. So long bent upon earth, they are now sealed to spiritual things; and the Cross once so near the bleeding Saviour, once so distinctly seen, is nowhere to be found.

In dismay, the anxious soul sweeps the whole horizon for help, and no help appears. But instead, a solemn voice is heard chanting the refrain, "Too late, too late. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and you are not saved." So, at last, is the impenitent life dragged forth from its hiding-place, — dragged forth by the hand of that law which proclaims, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

But turn we now to behold how securely the life of the Christian is hidden from *the condemnation and sentence of the Divine Law.* This law makes no exceptions, no more than gravity. It is as immutable as is the force which sweeps the stars along. The Christian escapes, not through being made an exception, but by having a Saviour. The law has two holds upon every created life. First, it demands the fulfilment of its positive precepts ; and, second, it demands expiation for transgression.

And now I see this law, armed with these two demands, pursuing the believer, — coming up to him. It is with the Christian the hour and power of death. "Your life has been very imperfect," cries the law. "You have come short in many things," re-echoes conscience. And to these accusations comes the reply, "Too true, too true! But I am not careful to answer in these matters. There is One who has fulfilled all righteousness, and my life is hid with Him." Then the next demand, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." And to this the Christian answers by pointing unto Him "who died, the just for the unjust."

So the Christian meets the law. So his life is hidden from its condemnation and sentence. So it escapes because it is hidden with One who has met and expiated this sentence. So the law cannot lay a hand upon the believer's life. So the Christian, in the hour of earth's extremity, can sweetly sing : —

> "'Jesus can make a dying bed
> Feel soft as downy pillows are.'

"My life, my treasure, my hope, my heaven, all

hid with Him, and they are safe, — safe for evermore."

The life which is hid with Christ is hidden from *the despoiler*. All life has enemies, its own particular enemies. The peach, the cherry, the plum, must each season fight their way to maturity. The life of each of these, and of all fruits, is ever menaced by its natural and determined foe. So is it in the sea. There life is preyed upon. So it is in the wilderness. Everywhere in the path of life stands the enemy with a drawn sword.

And to this general law, human life furnishes no exception. It has its enemies, which lie in ambush upon every side. One of these is *care*. Care, which is poison in life's fountain; care, which is the fly in the ointment; care, which is the mote in the eye; care, which is the worm at the root, — gnawing, gnawing.

Another of these enemies is *sorrow*.

> "The fool hath said there is no God;
> But none, there is no sorrow."

As sparks fly upward, so unto sorrow man is born. Hearts are ever aching; hearts are for ever breaking. The stream fed by human tears knows no drought. The dirge chanted by the mourners dies not out for ever, but in long and heavy waves moves down through the generations of men.

Another enemy is *sickness*. The brain loses its elasticity; the nerves grow flaccid; manly strength lies down upon a bed of pain. Womanly beauty perishes in the fire of disease. There are thousands

upon earth who, with every day of this earthly life, say, "I am sick." There are thousands from whom every recurring evening brings the sigh, "Would God it were morning." Then there is *poverty*, when the problem how to find bread for the open mouth, becomes a daily care; when the cupboard is empty, and the house is empty, and children cry, and mothers wring their hands in a helpless and measureless grief.

My hearers, have you a life that fears none of these enemies, which none of these despoilers can fasten upon, hidden from them all? Think a moment. Suppose, in addition to care, sorrow should come, and to sorrow should be added sickness, and with all these poverty should confederate. Have you a life which even this alliance could not reach unto, to destroy or to trouble?

If so, this life cannot be in the strength of your hands; for these hands will succumb to such an attack. If so, this life cannot lie in the power of your brain; for such power is weakness when so assaulted. If so, if your life is safe, it cannot consist of your abundance, is not in your bank balance, or in your stocks or real estate; for all these forms of life may receive their death at the hands of your life's enemies. If so, if your life is safe from all these assaults, then it must lie beyond the joys, the purposes, the employments and ambitions of this world; for these enemies which are on your track shall swallow down every form of earth-born power.

My hearers, the truth here is as plain as a picture.

You need God. There is but one life which none of these despoilers of humanity may hurt or find. It is the life which is hid with Christ. Let sickness come; but it cannot lay its hand upon the inner man. Let sorrows be multiplied; but they shall not find the life which is hidden with Him, in that land "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest." Let poverty come; and yet it even shall have no power to trouble the life which is hidden with Him whose are the heavens and the earth.

Brethren, my hearers, every day of my life almost, I see or hear of some poor human life hunted down by some one of its remorseless enemies. Now, it is sickness, and the strong man must drop out of the ranks, and lie alone within the shadows, his occupation all gone, his life's joy all gone, his ambition all gone. Now, it is sorrow, which, like a black cloud, shuts out the light of the human life. Now, again, it is Death, — Death pronouncing upon all the accumulation of years this fearful sentence, "Contraband in the realm to which I carry you."

Brethren, it is a pitiful sight this, of a human being losing its all at the hands of enemies which it is powerless to fight. And if this be a pitiful sight, then it is equally pitiful, the spectacle of a man who is hourly exposed to this complete and irreparable robbery. Is this the case with any of you? If so, oh, hear it, — hear, as if you never heard it before! You may hide your life, — hide it so deep and safe in the Saviour that not a hand of any despoiler shall ever rob you of it, — hide it so securely in the power of an

Almighty Keeper that it shall be yours with usury unto all eternity.

But again. The life which is hid with Christ, is hidden from all *liability and power of decay.* This power is not a special enemy of man. No ; but it is something worse. It is the fearful condition of disadvantage at which he must stand to battle with all the special foes of his life. Sickness may stand off from the human life, and say, "Let it be: it will soon wear out." Adverse fortune may fold her hands and say, "Let him make his money : it will soon drop from his hands. Let him wear his honors: he will soon need a shroud."

So decay is the general law, only not for the life which is hid with Christ. This life is the inner man, which is renewed day by day, even while the outer man perishes. It is the new building, which arises while the old is being taken down. The end of earth is only its beginning. It is that form of being which is never so strong, never so vigorous, never so full of life, as at that hour which men call death.

I add, in the last place, that the life which is hid with Christ is hidden from *all suicidal folly and danger* which might come from the believer himself. With the best intentions in the world, men mistake in the matter of the bodily life, and so shipwreck their health. So it might be in the moral sphere, if we had our life in our own hands. We might sell it for a mess of pottage. We might inflict serious, if not fatal, injury upon it, might expose it to our own loss. But not so, if it be hid with Christ. As we take valuable

gifts from the hands of children, and keep them against the day when they shall better appreciate them, so our life is hidden with the Saviour, that it may be safe from the folly of our own hands.

My hearers, I have only these words of application. Decay is breathing upon your earthly life. Enemies, many of them, surround it. Not long, at the longest, can it escape. I ask you, then, have you any other hope, any other expectation, any other life? Have you any thing up yonder, any treasure in Heaven? Have you a life hid with Christ, independent of all the accidents of time; safe from the law, safe from decay, safe from the suicidal folly of your own hands? Oh, if not, I beseech you hide your life in the cleft heart of the Saviour to-day! For this is Eternal Truth, *It is only that life which you have so hidden, which is safe, which is truly yours, and yours for evermore.*

VII.

THE TRUE INSPIRATION.

"For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." — Heb. xi. 27.

THE word "endure" is very emphatic here. It expresses better perhaps than any other word, what is called for by all true success in this world. It contains within itself these two ideas or elements: first, *patience;* second, *sustained exertion.* And these are ever the two qualities which lead on to great results.

Go into the business world to-day, and ask the men of wealth how they came unto their present estate, and they will answer you, "We endured." Then turn to the learned professions, to the men who are at the head of these professions, and you will learn from them the same secret of success. Few, if any of them, vaulted at a single bound into their present elevated positions. But they came unto this height slowly, through long-continued and patient efforts. They endured, — endured hardness, endured defeat, and so are to-day winners and masters.

Now take in the other expression of the text, "as seeing Him who is invisible." This also has its setting in the lower successes of human life. What

made the little shop-keeper endure? Whence came this inspiration to him? Why, he endured as seeing the invisible. He saw the invisible success, the invisible wealth, the invisible palace store, which should cover a square and employ a thousand men. So the lawyer saw that which was invisible. He saw that invisible judge's bench, those famous opinions, that name of honor and renown. And so he endured, endured those long days of waiting and of working.

And it is not otherwise in all the spheres of secular activity. Men are saved by hope. Their inspiration is drawn from pictured possibilities. They endure as seeing, because they see the invisible. They succeed, because they see what to other eyes is unseen. To them it is plain enough.

Now, taught by these analogies, we ascend to the highest realm, and behold! the principle by which human life wins is still the same. It is still a paradox, — the sight of the invisible. That wrath of the Egyptian king. An ordinary man, a sensuous man, would have seen nothing else. Such a one would have said: "What, brave Pharaoh's anger! He would be a fool who would dare such an attitude." And so such a one would have remained in the palace, dressed in soft raiment, and crumbled into the kingly ashes of oblivion. And this he would have done, saying, "I think I hit it nicely. What a lucky man I am! There is nothing like a man keeping his eyes open!"

"His eyes open." This was just Moses' case. He saw so well, so far, that he beheld the invisible.

Above Pharaoh's throne he beheld a greater and a loftier throne. In that region which is cloud-land to the man of sense, he beheld this throne rise until it overtopped the heavens. Upon this throne he beheld the Everlasting Ruler, the King of kings. And so Moses endured. He said, "What is Pharaoh, or what is a home in his palace? Let his honors perish; let his wrath come. I abide in the palace of the King Eternal, and my promotion is from Him." So Moses made his choice, and wore the crown of life. It was his far-reaching glance which did it all. "He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

My hearers, as you further dwell upon this general subject, let your minds run along the line of this thought. *The sight of the invisible the true inspiration of human life.*

I remark first. It furnishes *the necessary antidote and correction of sense.* Let us see how men live. Ten to one the beggar who was at your door last winter begging for bread will be there again this winter. And yet, between these two winters, there have been many possibilities within the reach of the humblest. These possibilities came with the spring, with the May-flowers in these shapes: first, of *reduced necessities;* secondly, of *opportunity for working.*

Why, then, will the beggar of last winter be the beggar of this winter? What causes this continuity of incapableness? The answer is, "These poor creatures live without forethought." Through the long summer months they lie in the sun, as though there never was to be another winter. The squirrel runs

with his nuts, the ant lays up her stores. Both anticipate. Instinct in both takes hold of the invisible. But man, in whose head we say is reason, often lives for the present alone. His clothing is thin and in rags, but it is sufficient for summer ; and so he thinks not of getting better. He has no coal in his shanty, and no money to purchase it ; but coal is not wanted in July ; and January, — the man sees it not. He takes not hold of the invisible.

But we need not stay in this low region of illustration. Up above, the truth is still the same. Nothing differentiates men so much as this power to see the invisible. Call it what you will, genius, long-headedness, foresight, there is such a quality in human nature ; and there is its opposite, short-sightedness, an inability to pierce the future by a single shaft of thought or purpose. And men lose through this latter, and they win by the former. The men to whom the future is to belong are to-day pre-empting that future. Then, after a while, the drove of the ordinary, the crowd, will come up to this future, and be surprised to find it is all taken. You telegraph for a berth in the car or the boat. So the man of power telegraphs for his berth in the future, and it is made ready for him. The crowd around him wait until the future becomes the present, and then sleep on deck. Perhaps one of them happens upon a vacant sofa.

And as it is in the material, so is it in the moral realm. Here, also, the absorbing power of sense, the inability or the failure to take hold on the future, is man's greatest danger. Thousands all around us are

living altogether forgetful, just as though there was no such thing as death or judgment or heaven or hell; and for no other reason than because these things are in the future. They shut death out of their minds, because Death is not grinning in their faces. They ignore judgment, because it is a coming judgment. They disobey God, because they think Him a few days ahead.

There can be no doubt, my hearers, that tens of thousands are neglecting religion for this very reason, that they are wrapped up in the present, all forgetful of the future. To-day is full of honors, houses, lands, offices, dinners, wines; in a word, full of the cares and profits and pleasures of sense: and the future, in which Death stands, and Judgment sits, and God waits, is all unseen. Is it not so? Why, what does the Bible say, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." What does reason say? That no sane man could think upon his personal accountability to God, and the immortal life before him, and his life remain all uninfluenced by these facts. What does the experience of the world say? That these same careless persons become serious and alarmed, when Death takes hold of them. In the latter day, "they consider perfectly."

And this, which I say is the ruin of so many, is the danger of us all. We are all exposed to peril here. The tendency of each one of us is to forget the great future in the little present, to live for this world

alone. Hence it happens that we so often succumb to temptation. Hence the frequency of our descents to the base and sensual level. To-day says, Sell me your birthright for this nice warm pottage ; and we sell. Fools that we are, we sell. To our ineffable shame, and to the disinheritance of our future, we sell.

Such being our danger, from whence shall come our safety ? With this false and dangerous tendency, whither shall we look for a corrective as strong and as constant as is our perilous inertia ? The text says, To the invisible. The record of those who have conquered says, To the invisible. Reason says, To the invisible. We must come to take hold of unseen reality. We must come to walk by faith, to steer our lives by the polestar of God's infinite throne.

And this will save us. Thinking of coming death, we shall prepare to meet it. Dying daily, we shall be able at last to die triumphantly. Anticipating the judgment, we shall bow to its voice in present law. Living as before God, we shall live unto God. In a word, seeing Him who is invisible, we shall endure as Moses endured, and conquer as Moses conquered.

But we need more than remembrance, more than forethought here. We need besides knowledge, *motive;* besides light, we must have *incentive.* And this, again, comes from seeing the invisible. The same paradox here, is the law.

Look at the case of Moses. Pharaoh's daughter offered him her name. This meant royalty, — Egypt's throne perhaps, — grandeur and power, the greatest on earth. Under these circumstances, did Moses

need nothing more than knowledge of duty? Why, knowledge cannot hold a man true to the right course under such a press of temptation, any more than the compass can hold back the ship from the rocks whereon the gale is driving her. Light! we have all had it, and fallen again and again. Instruction! passion snaps its strongest cords, burns them to a crisp in a moment. But the invisible, "seeing him who is invisible," is more than a finger to point out the way; it is also a strong hand to hold, and hurry us forward along that way. It is the angel of annunciation telling Lot to escape; it is also the angel of rescue pushing him out of the doomed city.

In his stress, Moses looked unto the invisible, and what did he see? A living God looking down upon life, its Lord and its Judge. And this glance, what did it for Moses? It saved him. It showed him Pharaoh's throne in the light of the great White Throne. It contrasted Pharaoh's anger and God's wrath, Pharaoh's palace and God's heaven. And, when the tempted one saw all this, he was made strong, equipped for the struggle, ready to endure.

So it shall be with you, my hearers, when you shall come to see "Him who is invisible." I suppose the strongest of all cases. Proffered success as great and brilliant as may be, abundant wealth, the dream of all your youth, the ambition of your manhood, honor so great that the sight of it dazzles, pleasure so sweet that it sets the blood on fire. And all this yours, if only you are willing to lay aside your morality, to forfeit integrity, and, like the bird of prey, to swoop

down to a lower level, to go in and win on your lower qualities.

What is your safety, what your hope in such a crisis? It is a glance upward to the invisible God. It is to catch the eye of the Judge who sentences for eternity. It is to hear Him, as he says unto you, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" This will save you. It will make you strong to endure. With God as a witness, you will not sell your birthright for a mess of pottage. With God looking on, you will not lie down in the mire. With your face raised to God, you will lose sight of the temptation and stand.

I know these temptations turn the head, bewilder the brain, set every thing whirling and spinning in a confused maze. So was it with the boy when climbing to the mast-head. But from the deck came a voice which saved him. "Look up, my son! look up! look up!" The boy did so, and was saved. So you must do in the hour of your peril, look upward. A glance at the invisible will purge your vision, calm your passions, save your soul. For God's throne does not spin round; the eternal star of duty flickers not, dances not, as it shines upon the bosom of His eternity.

But the human life needs more than knowledge, more than motive even. *It also needs encouragement*, that encouragement which brings peace and makes duty a joy. This also comes from seeing Him who is invisible. In the hour of its danger, the human heart needs to hear a voice saying unto it, "Be of good

cheer: victory waits for you, and the crown is ready." I know that men perish for lack of understanding, hecatombs of them. I remember that human lives perish for lack of motive, untold scores of them. But even more perish for lack of sympathy in the hours which make up the crisis of their immortality.

Ah, how many might have been saved, if in the hour of their temptation they could have felt a brother's hand laid upon their shoulder, and heard a brother's voice in their ears, saying, "Stand fast, stand fast: your loss will be more than your gain if you yield!" But no such hand was reached forth to steady, no such voice of sympathy and love sounded out. It was midnight with them. Birds of ill omen flapped their wings in the heavy darkness. False lights (lighted in hell) flashed through the darkness, confusing the sight. The whisperings of temptation bewildered the ear. The coveted good just before them shone forth in radiant colors. And they were alone in this their hour and power of darkness. And so, with work all gone, money all gone, friends all gone, hope almost gone, the tempter triumphed, and the man, the woman fell.

Ah, it is too true, my hearers! Over many a one who has thus gone down in this world might be written this epitaph, "I looked around me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." But if, at such a time, the endangered ones could only have looked upon the invisible. If they could have looked into a realm of purity. If they could have seen the invisible God, and by His side the Son who over-

came through the cross. This sight would have saved them. Sympathetic chords would have reached from the Eternal Throne to their failing faith and weakening hope, and along these would have flashed these words of encouragement and strength, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." To him that overcometh, the victory shall be for ever. To him that overcometh, abounding, untempted, perfect life for evermore.

So has many an endangered life been saved. So has many a tempted one endured. And so may you endure, my hearers. The sight of the invisible will save you. Save you by hope; save you by encouragement, which it shall extend; save you by the power of Divine sympathy. I am speaking to this point, my hearers. *The sight of the invisible, the true inspiration of human life.* It is so, because it affords a constant and strong corrective to the dangerous power of the seen and the temporal; because it supplies the motive which is necessary to true life; and because it feeds the human heart with that encouragement and hope without which no one is strong to endure, no one valiant to act.

I must also add, that this sight of the invisible One must be the true inspiration, *because of the immortality of human life.* It isn't here that we come unto our growth. It isn't here that we reap any more than the first-fruits of our harvest. No! Ours is the endowment of an endless life, and the stake with us is not *time*, but *eternity*. It must be, therefore, that we need, that we cannot do without, the inspira-

tion which comes from the unseen realm, — from the invisible God. We, who are going unto God, cannot safely guide our lives, save by the sight of God. We, who are to dwell above the stars, may not direct our course by any thing beneath the stars. Our immortality lays this upon us a necessity, the obligation to live as immortals. It points us, with an unerring finger, to the true source of inspiration, the invisible God, unto whom it binds us in the momentous relation of everlasting life or of everlasting death.

And then, so many have conquered in this way. Read the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is the roll of honor written by God's own hand. Upon this imperishable page are written the names of those of whom the world was not worthy. And right beneath their names is inscribed the secret of their victory. "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith." Faith it was — this long foresight which takes in and draws inspiration from the unseen world — which lifted them to their high pre-eminence, and made God, their Maker, well pleased to write down their names for the ages.

And so it has been since their time. In many a sick-room, wasting away day by day ; in many a work-room, with fingers worn to the bone, — there have lived those who have triumphed through this sight of the invisible. Italy's plains, Italy's mountains, Italy's catacombs, are full of the ashes of such. They braved infernal Rome, they laid hold of eternal life, animated and sustained by the inspiration of which we speak. They endured as seeing, because they saw Him who is invisible.

And now, my hearers, I lift up out of this great subject, and place plainly before your minds, these two inferential truths.

First. *A warning to the life of sense.* In the name of this momentous subject, I say unto you, distrust your life, if it is lived out of all conscious relation to the unseen world, and to the invisible God who rules over that world. It matters not what you may be in other relations. You may be an honored citizen. You may be just in all your business affairs. You may be true and pure in your social relations. But if your life is cut off from the unseen world, if it catches no glimpse of Him who is invisible, it lacks the inspiration necessary to the great success; it is, and must be, false and unsafe. While God lives and rules, no creature life can afford to ignore Him. While human life continues to be assaulted by the world, the flesh, and the devil, it is not possible to endure, save by a sight of Him who is invisible. While shoals and rocks threaten, no man can steer safely over the sea of life, unless he daily takes his observation in the light which falls from the throne of the invisible God.

Secondly. *How reasonable is that life of which faith is the dominant principle!* Is it not true, I ask you, that death is to confer upon us citizenship in the invisible world? What, then, more reasonable than that we should anticipate and prepare for this our sublime majority. Is there not a living and reigning God upon the infinite throne? And shall we not look upward? shall we not draw inspiration from the

sight of Him? Shall we not live as before God? And this is the life to which religion calls. And I declare unto you, my hearers, that, if you repudiate this life to-day, you repudiate not only obligation and safety, but you repudiate every instinct of prudence, and every dictate of reason as well.

My hearers, the voice of this subject is ever this, — God lives and reigns. His law is dominant. There is a world grander and more lasting than this. And such is my message to you to-day. Oh! then, to-day, catch a sight of God, the invisible One. If your life is right, this sight will but give you a fuller peace, a nobler inspiration. And if your life is such that a glimpse of the invisible God will disturb it, — why, better have it disturbed now than at a future and a hopeless day. For it must come — must come — this sight of God.

VIII.

FAITH CULTURE.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." — John vii. 17.

IT is quite possible for any one of us to go out on the street, and by a number of rapid and unnatural revolutions of the body, so to confuse the brain, that all the objects around us, and even the solid earth beneath our feet, will seem to dance before our eyes, and to whirl round and round in a most bewildering confusion. So, also, is it possible for a man to whirl round and round in an unworthy and bad life, until his moral nature is so confused that the most unmoving facts of the moral world will dance before his mental vision, and the very foundations of moral truth be broken up in a mocking, whirling, hopeless maze.

But, in both of these cases, the disturbance is within, not without. It is in the eye which sees, not in the things which are seen. The dance is in here, not out there. The drunken man's pavement does not rise and fall, neither are the lamp-posts in the middle of the walk. The trouble is, that the man's brain is dazed, and his vision confused. Rum has turned the

world upsidedown to him. So in the case of the sceptic. His disobedience of moral law, the false and unnatural movements of his spirit, have set every thing whirling and spinning. Eternal verities now dance before his mind as so many unsubstantial fancies, only because his moral vision has been deranged.

And the remedy in both cases is the same. Let the drunken man become sober, and he will see things as they are. Let the sceptic turn to duty, and he will come to know truth. "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine." In other words, if any man will live the life which he knows to be good and the best, this life shall anchor his soul to undoubted truth. If any man will bow to duty, as it is revealed by the Saviour, the clear shining of this life will scatter doubts, as the rising sun scatters the mists of the morning. Give me your attention, I pray you, my hearers, while I endeavor to open up to you the fulness of this great fact and law.

How can the impure man believe in purity? Is it for his interest to do so? Is it for his peace and happiness? Would not such faith work as fire in his veins? Would it not be a constant dagger in his soul? How is it possible for the wilful transgressor to believe in and magnify the law, which is gathering its thunders above his head? I tell you it is true, the old couplet: —

> "No rogue e'er felt the halter draw
> With good opinion of the law."

Faith fails, and must fail, when life withdraws its

support. But a short time ago, I heard of a man whose antecedents were religious and whose own freely formed relations are such also, who publicly, and with all seriousness, questioned the truth of human immortality. Do you ask, What shall be said in explanation of such a phenomenon? Why this, — there is no mystery about it. Let that man continue a few years longer in political life (such as he makes it), let him continue a few years longer to grow rich amazingly fast upon an amazingly small salary, and he will have no doubts upon the subject which he is now debating. He will then be sure that there is no future life; probably also, that there is no God.

How can such a man believe in Heaven? Has he much interest in it? How can he believe in Hell? Has he not too much interest in this? The truth is, the man has so abused his moral nature, so riddled it with transgression, that it is no longer capable of holding faith, — faith in a God who will punish sin. Faith leaks out of such a man, as water runs from the tub which has stood for weeks in the blazing sun.

So there are scores around us whose immorality has made them sceptics. They have not grown beyond faith mentally, but they have sunk below it morally. Our city is full of young men, and of men whose youth is not so evident, whose present lives fall far below that of father or mother, or that of their own earlier days. Now, such often attempt to justify themselves, and say, "We do not believe as we formerly did, and hence our license in life." But if they will look into the matter closely, they will find that they

are putting cause for effect, and effect for cause. They do not believe as they did in that distant day and home: this is true, but it is because they first came to live as they did not there and then. First, the life was lowered, then the creed. First, practice was loosened, and then the creed was liberalized. They first trampled under foot a mother's example, and then into the same mire threw her Bible. The new crew was first received on board, and then the new flag was run up to the mast-head. They never thought of changing their views as to the obligations of the Sabbath until they had violated, or wished to violate, its sanctity. They cut the prayer-meeting out of their creed, after they ceased to attend it. They first neglected the church, and then laughed at it.

Yes, my hearers, I fully believe, that, in nine cases out of ten, an explanation for weakened faith can be found in a disordered and weakened and false life. Search these persons out, and you will find that the atmosphere in which they live, and through which they look upon spiritual things, is by no means a pure one; and this is the reason why they do not see moral truth clearly, and hold it firmly. One has thickened his atmosphere with a conscienceless greed for gain. Another, with a fierce and unprincipled desire for power. Still another has poured round her the thickening, dead-sweet nebula of silly and senseless pleasure, and from the midst of this she looks out upon spiritual things; seeing them about as clearly as you see the leaves of the tree or the face of the sun through the medium of stained windows.

But special and to my point is the large number of those who have never, for any length of time, received the benefit of continuous moral culture, — of that culture which comes not alone from the Church, but from the respective duties which rest upon every permanent member of a community. Unfortunately, they have had money, and have travelled, — their summers at the watering-places, their winters in Paris. Or, as unfortunately, they have had no money, and have been driven from home to seek it. In either case, the result has been the same, — moral vagrancy. Find these persons to-day, and many of them will laugh at the religious faith of those who have never seen the world. But what has seeing the world meant to them? Why this: no Sabbath, no church, no Christian activities, no responsible place in, or duties to, any community.

Birds of passage they have been; a life which no man or woman was ever made for. In other words, they have transgressed the normal conditions of human life, and their faith has suffered as an inevitable consequence of this. Had they found a place in some community or other, — keeping a store, opening an office, holding a position of trust, going in and out before their fellow-men, in the performance of duties worthy to be done; had they built up for themselves a home, had they taken upon themselves the respective duties, which, in the home, in the Church, and in the community, God intended every man and woman should bear; in short, had they lived a true, natural, healthy, useful life, — they would not to-day be either

rejoicing or mourning over the loss of faith, they would not to-day be drifting upon a sea of doubt.

Opposite to this is another illustration of the same truth. Many a one has swept away doubt after doubt with the strong hand of a good and useful life. Living the truth, they have come to know and believe in the truth. The morning of their life, like all mornings, had its mists and clouds, but the growing sunlight of a loving life has scattered them, and the noon is bright, — bright in itself, and bright with the prophecy of an evening, when the sun shall gently sink in a golden sky unspotted by a single cloud. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "At the eventime there shall be light."

So by human experience, so by example all around us, is justified the declaration, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." But this law is by no means an arbitrary one. It rests upon reasons which are plain and all-sufficient. I mention some of them.

First: a large part of moral and religious truth is practical, and cannot be known except through experience; that is, through living it. You can believe in London, — that there is such a place, without ever having seen it. It is a mere exercise of the intellect to do this. So you can demonstrate that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. There is no need, no place, for experience here. But take this declaration, — a pure and good life is the happiest. How can you, how can any one, surely know whether

this is true or not until by experience you test it? So Christ stands before the world and says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." But it is not possible for any one to know that this is true or not true, until he makes trial, — until he actually does come unto Christ.

Or, take this declaration, — God hears and answers prayer. There is no way of putting this to the test, except by living a life of prayer. And this is the explanation, the justification, of the principle of the text; because religious truth is not speculation, not mere dogma, but truth designed for the regulation of the life. You look upon a drug while the physician says, "It will cure headache." Now you may have an opinion that it will, but you cannot know it until you try the medicine. So Christ's service is medicinal. He says unto men: "It cures heartache; it gives peace." But you cannot hold this declaration in a shape worthy the name of faith until you have put it to the test of personal experience. You cannot say, "I know," until you do know; and you can know only through life.

And here let me say to those among you who, in the presence of neglected duty, are waiting for more light and stronger faith, that you will wait in vain. You may say, "If I believed all that the Christian does, I would commence." But I tell you that you shall never have more faith until you bow right loyally to the Right which you now see, to Duty already known. While you wait, while you refuse to accept her rightful sway over your life, you will lose faith rather than

gain it, and this all the while. The starving man may not wait for more strength before he takes of the food placed before him. If he does, he will die while he waits.

Every day of your unworthy life has its vampire mouth sucking away the life of your faith. Every day that you deny to moral truth already known the obedience of your life, you do so much to obscure this truth. Out of every immoral and unchristian act a baleful mist will arise and spread itself over the shining facts and laws of the moral world, and you will see them less clearly. Ever is it true, the law of the moral creation, that those who turn away from duty turn to wander in darkness.

A second justification of the principle of the text is this, — spiritual things are spiritually discerned. So it is with scientific things. Newton was living in the atmosphere of science, with the faculty of observation in fullest exercise, or he would not have seen the apple drop. An accident you may call it. But it was an accident which could only have happened to a Newton. So always scientific things are scientifically discerned. A blind man would never have recognized Frauenhofer's spectroscopic lines.

Now, there is in man a moral faculty which is set into relation with moral truth. There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding. But this faculty, like all others, to be useful, must be exercised. The lapidary tells the quality of the stone by the touch of his tongue. So the tea-taster goes from box to box, by a single taste

fixing the value of the box. So the moral faculty, exercised in the direction of truth and duty, becomes quick and unerring to detect them. The conscience, like Ithuriel's spear, discloses falseness and error by a single touch. Many a man who is in no sense intellectually great is yet wonderfully able to disentangle sophistry, to lift the truth which is covered over with error, to cut the path of duty plain and straight through the most tangled maze.

You will readily recall here the old phrase of "threading the labyrinth." The one who desired to visit the dark and winding passages used to take the end of a spool of thread in his hand, unwinding it as he went into the maze. And when he desired to return to the light, all that he needed to do was to follow back his guiding thread. Now, to a good man, to an obedient spirit, conscience is this thread. Out of the darkest windings it leads unto the light. There is not that labyrinth of error on earth in which such a man can be lost. He will reach unto the day, as surely as the blind instinct of the cellar vine turns to the sun.

I know faith is spoken of as the gift of God. But, like all other gifts of God, this has its condition. God can no more give it unto a bad life, than He can give beauty and sweetness to the flower which never sees the light, or bone and muscle and strength to the man who will not allow food to pass his lips, or riches to the idler and the spendthrift. He gives faith, but upon the condition that a man embodies it in life as fast as received. "He that doeth His will shall know of the doctrine."

I turn now to make some applications of this subject. First: it furnishes *a solution of the scepticism of some men of science.* We will not deny to the scientist of this class any thing that he may claim, — impartial observation, sharp mental faculties, a clear and faultless logic. And now when such a one comes forth from his laboratory and says, "I find in the laws of affinity, in the deposits of past ages, in the structure of the human frame, no demonstration of a God," what do we say? Simply this. We never expected that you would. Your power of observation may be good, but human eyes cannot take in God as they can a fossil or a planet. They are not the organ of reception here.

I pray you, my hearers, look at this for a moment. The Gospel invitation is, "Come and see. Duty leads in a plain path. Obey God, and you shall know God." And, hearing this, the scientific sceptic turns his back upon duty, restrains prayer, ignores Christ, and cries out, "Where is the God you speak of? I do not see Him; I do not feel Him; He is not in my crucible. He is not under the eye of my microscope; He is not in the field of my telescope." This is very much as if you asked a friend to come with you to the window to see the glory of the setting sun, and he should turn and butt up against the wall, crying out, "I see nothing: where is it?"

A man who would come into the presence of God must walk the path which leads unto this presence. There is a hill of science, and there is another hill. We say not, that the former commands not a noble

prospect. It does. Is well worth climbing. All that we affirm, and what the Bible declares is, that the outlook from it is not the same as that from the other hill called Calvary. Right living, not sharp thinking, is the condition here. As well might we expect the scientist to bring to us the colors of the rainbow in his closed hand, as to bring to us our God, our Heavenly Father, in the grasp of his hypothesis. It is the pure heart which sees God. It is the loving heart which feels God. It is the sincere and upright and obedient life that demonstrates God.

Again: this subject also helps *to discern the origin, and to determine the value*, of another very common species of scepticism, which we may term *popular* in distinction from scientific. Many men who are prominent in public life are more or less sceptical. And it is to be feared that this fact sometimes exercises a baleful influence upon younger and weaker lives. For such may be tempted to ask, If these things are true and important, why does not that man there, that Senator, that Judge, whose minds are much better cultured than mine, — why do not they receive and act upon them?

My hearers, — and I speak unto the youngest and weakest of you, — you must never allow such a question to trouble you. The explanation of the scepticism which you see is to be found in the life, all of which you do not see. You and I, if we had lived such lives as those men have lived; if we had been as often and as long in the primaries where things are set up; if we had for so long a time breathed a

bad moral atmosphere; if for years we had been going in to win, where winning is done through the lower qualities of human nature; if we had so long neglected prayer, transgressed conscience, and ignored Christ, — we would to-day be just as sceptical as they. Does the murderer like to believe in ghosts? Is he apt to believe in them? No more does a man like to believe in truth which he has trampled under his feet, the upspurting life-blood of which he has often wiped from his face.

I tell you, my hearers, in all plainness and solemnity, that, instead of regarding the scepticism of these persons as a reason for doubting the facts and laws of the moral world, it should be with you the strongest of all reasons for immediate and most loyal obedience to all duty, lest while you delay, and through the infernal alchemy of transgression, the light which is in you be changed into darkness.

And this thought leads naturally to another application of the truth which we are considering. It is this, — *the fearful danger which attaches to continued impenitence.* This impenitence of yours, my hearer, this holding back from duty, is the slow murdering of your faith. Soon, it may be before you fear it, she shall drop dead within your soul, and you be left without an impulse to take hold upon God, without a motive to move you toward salvation. This is that moral state which the Scripture sets forth by the words "being past feeling." This is what is meant by "grieving the Spirit of God." This is spiritual reprobation, — moral death.

I only add, as a closing application of this subject, *that it is useful for direction to those who would enter upon the Christian life.* The way to do this is not to wait for more feeling, not to delay for stronger faith, but to take up that duty or duties already known, already before you. Break off from your sins by righteousness, and from your iniquities by turning unto the Lord. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. This is the one simple way to begin to be a Christian, and besides it there is no other.

And, my hearers, if there is a truth in your mind to-day, which you have not put into your life, which you have not endeavored to put into it; if there is a single duty before you which you have refused to take up, — then is it very plain why you are not a Christian. And it is also clear that condemnation, complete and self-asserting, rests upon your guilty life.

Finally: Before each of us to-night reach out two paths. One is straight and plain, and the light which falls upon it grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. It is the path of the just, the path of those who are willing to live the truth, and do the duty which they know. The other is the path of the wandering star, which, fallen from its bright orbit, wanders in darkness in "the blackness of darkness for ever." It is the path of those who know their duty, but do it not.

In which of these paths will you walk? Of this be assured, — God has lodged within the sweep of your power both Christian life and Christian faith. You may crown them both, or you may crucify them both.

But this one thing is certain, — you cannot long retain faith, unless you embody it in a good and pure and obedient life.

May He who is infinite in love and wonderful in working help you and me unto the double victory here, — unto the victory of the faith which knows no doubt, through the victory of that life which will tolerate no evil.

IX.

THE DEATH OF JESUS.

"And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him." — Luke xxiii. 33.

THE International Sunday-school lesson for to-day is the crucifixion of our Lord.

It is not too much therefore to say, that, during the hours of this holy day, tens of thousands will turn their minds to the consideration of the death of Jesus, the Nazarene ; that before the sun shall set hundreds of thousands shall pass before the cross, each one of them turning his eyes upon the crucified Redeemer. Let us, too, join the throng, with them to move unto the cross, with them to pause in its presence, and with them also to turn our eyes upon Calvary, — upon the strange victim, — to see the sight, to take that look, which through all time has had such wonderful influence over the mind and heart of man.

Peradventure, this shall be a day of wonderful power in the moral world ; and perchance too, some of you, for the first time shall stand transfixed before the cross, discovering all at once, in the One who hangs upon it, your Saviour and your Lord. That this shall prove the result of this morning's sight, let every one of us lift up solemn prayer unto Him

whose prerogative it is to enlighten the eyes, and under whose touch the human heart becomes as the heart of a little child.

I shall gather what I have to say to you this morning, as you stand in the presence of the cross, around this form of statement, — *the death of Christ was an essential part of His earthly mission.*

Notice that I do not say that his death comprehended within it all of this work. Doubtless there are many benefits which flow to the world from the life of Jesus. Take the Sermon on the Mount. No human mind can compute the mighty influence of this upon the world. "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." Such words as these, falling century after century upon the human heart of millions, becomes a factor of human history unspeakably grand. And had Jesus been translated to Heaven so soon as He uttered these sentiments, had He done nothing more than to speak these words, still would He have laid the hand of power upon all the cycles of this world's history, and proved Himself a benefactor of man, even down to the remotest generation. Still, this additional fact does not at all militate against the proposition which I announce, to which I ask you now to turn, *that Jesus' death was an essential part of His mission of salvation.*

Go back with me twenty-seven hundred years and listen to the prophet of God, as, in words given him from on high, he sets forth the nature of the promised and the coming One. "Surely He hath borne our

griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with his stripes we are healed." "He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was He stricken."

Now, I ask you, my hearers, is this the picture of a great reformer merely? Is it fulfilled, can it be fulfilled, in any mere teacher, however original, however great? Does Jesus, as He sits surrounded by His disciples, opening His mouth in words the freshest and the most influential which this world ever heard, does He fill out the picture of the prophet? Draw near unto the scene of the Sermon on the Mount, to which I have already referred. Where are the wounds here? the bruises? the chastisement? the death? Where is any thing which answers back to that despised, to that rejected, to that smitten, to that dying One, photographed by the prophet? There is nothing which does so.

But, my hearers, I cannot dwell at any length upon this part of the argument. All that I do here is to point you, by means of one used as an example, to the prophecies of the Old Testament, and to assure you that they set forth a Christ who was to die; that they even give a special prominence to the article of His death, as a substantial part of His earthly mission. And I think it is not too much to say, that whoever be the individual, or whatever the church

which has a Christ who accomplishes His work for man apart from and without His death, such an individual, such a church, has not the Christ of prophecy. This Christ is One who *must* die, who fulfils His mission to the world in and by dying.

I pass to a second argument, which is contained in the fact *that Christ was prefigured by the divinely appointed sin-offerings of the Jewish Church.* These all pointed to Him, and all their virtue was in this on-reaching, this anticipated, significance. This is distinctly taught. No one can keep the New Testament and dismiss the Old. If he takes the former, he must the latter. The historical Christ binds these two together, and the hand which would attempt disruption here must tear in twain the living body of Jesus. He stands, reaching back to the Old, saying, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." Not a word, not a jot nor a tittle, shall pass from the Law and the Prophets. So He links Himself to the Old Testament; and the man or church who would have Jesus must take the First Covenant with Him. If the sacraments of the Jewish Church were heathenish, why, they are heathenism which the Great Teacher approves, to which He commits Himself, out of which He came, by which He stands for ever.

But more particularly. Not only do the Old and New Testaments go together, *but the sacrificial lamb of the former is declared to be one in significance with the Jesus of the latter.* For centuries men had been bringing their sin-offerings unto the altar; and now when Jesus appears, no sooner does Inspiration catch

a glimpse of Him, than she cries out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Behold at last God's Lamb, the One slain from the foundation of the world. Thus is it declared that in the sight of God, who knows of no such thing as past or future, there is but one sacrificial victim, but one lamb, and that this one was slain in every sin-offering of the Jewish Church. That is, these sin-offerings were types of Christ. They stood for Christ. And now the question comes up, How can this be so, if Jesus' death is not an essential part of His mission?

In imagination, stand for a moment before the Jewish altar. The lamb, spotless, perfect, it must be, is presented. The offerer places his hands upon its head. And now it bleeds, it dies. Now, my hearers, I ask you what is the significance, what is the one idea, of such a scene as this? Is it not the forfeiture of life? is it not death? The lamb is brought forward, presented, for what? Why, that it may die. The hands of the offerer are placed upon its head, that it may be prepared for death. Every thing here looks to, tends towards, ends in, death. The one prominent thing here is the purposed, the formal, destruction of life.

And now, how shall Jesus fill out this idea of the lamb, of the sin-offering? There is but one way in which this can be done, and that is by His death. And I do not see how any individual, or any church, in view of the relation between Christ and the sin-offering, can support itself in the assertion that the

death of the Saviour was not an essential part of His saving work for man. Surely, it is not possible to find in a teacher, in a reformer, in a martyr even, the antitype of the flowing blood of sacrifice.

And so long as the Old and New Testaments are so bound together, so long as we are distinctly taught that the sacrificial victim laid upon the Jewish altar was a type of the coming Saviour, so long are we compelled to regard the cross as an integral portion of the Gospel. You cannot get rid of the cross, save as you get rid of the Old Testament; and you cannot get rid of the Old Testament without dishonoring the New: and so it comes to this, that you must either keep the cross or reject the Bible. And if you reject the Bible, where is Christ the Teacher, — the model man? Why, He goes too; for the reason of man will refuse to receive Him upon the testimony of a book already rejected, already proven a tissue of superstition and exaggeration.

But I pass to another argument. It is *the importance which all the Evangelists place upon the death of the Saviour.* This importance is clearly evident in the fulness and minuteness with which, in each of the Gospels, the cross is set forth. The Gospels are not mere duplicates of each other. They were written by different persons, for different classes, and with an especial purpose governing in the substance of the matter and the arrangement of each one of them. So you will often find that what one Evangelist records is omitted by all the others. Then again, in two of the Gospels, you will come across matter which is left out of the other two.

Take illustrations. Luke alone records the parable of the Prodigal Son, and that of Dives and Lazarus. Then as to the Sermon on the Mount. This is recorded with great fulness in Matthew, and nearly as full in Luke; but you will search in vain for any portion of it in Mark or in John. Then for another illustration of this same fact or principle, consider the last discourse of Jesus and His intercessory prayer. John gives these, but neither Matthew nor Mark nor Luke makes even the slightest record of them. So I could illustrate in a score or more of cases. But these are sufficient.

And now, I ask you, what is the meaning of this? Does it not, at least, indicate to us the fact that not all of Jesus' words, not every one of His actions, not all of His life, had to be written in order to give the Gospel to the world? Matthew must have purposed to give this Gospel to those for whom he wrote. Yet he omits two of the largest and most beautiful of the parables, and he leaves out altogether the largest and last of Jesus' formal discourses. The Holy Ghost must have said to him, "You can give the Gospel without these. These are not altogether important. Those who read your words will have a full Christ without them."

But come now to the death of the Saviour. Matthew gives up one hundred and twenty-five verses to this subject. Out of his short book of sixteen chapters, Mark devotes two to the same event. Luke is quite as full as either Mark or Matthew, using about one hundred verses in setting forth the circumstances

of the death of Jesus. And John, writing long after the three Evangelists, when he might so easily have said, "The Gospels already written are so full and explicit upon the subject of the death of Jesus, that I will pass over it," — what does he do? Why, he follows on in the same path, and details, even more minutely than those who had written before him, all the circumstances which led to, and all the events and incidents which encircle, the cross.

Now, I ask you, my hearers, is it not plain that the authors of the Gospels must have regarded the death of the Saviour as an integral, as an elemental, part of His mission; such a part, indeed, as that the Gospel could not be given without it? What, then, is the alternative? Either the writers of the Gospels were mistaken, or we must receive the death of Jesus as a *sine qua non* of the Gospel. Suppose you take the first alternative, — the Evangelists were mistaken. If so, then who can tell how many other mistakes they made? So the Gospels go, and Jesus, of course, goes with them; for our Jesus is given to us through the Gospels. We must either, then, believe in a Christ who accomplished His work for man through His death, or else give up our Christ altogether. We must either receive the Jesus whose death is an essential part of His work for man, or reject both Christ and the Gospels together.

I mention another argument upon this point, which is found in what we may call *the Apostolic amplification and use of the death of the Saviour.* Not only do the Evangelists give special prominence to the cross

of Christ, but the Apostles, to whom was committed the duty of perfecting the system of Christian doctrine, also do the same, — ever putting the cross, the death, the blood of Jesus in the foreground. Thus Paul speaks of "The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." And again, in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." So Peter speaks of "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The Apostle John also declares, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." And in the book of the Revelation this is the picture: the innumerable company of the redeemed stand before the throne, praising God for their salvation; and these are the words which they use: "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

And now one more quotation in illustration. I take it from the Epistle to the Hebrews. "But Christ being come a high priest, . . . neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For, if the blood of bulls and of goats sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God." So full, my hearers, are the Epistles of Christ as a sacrifice. The crimson stream from the cross runs not only through the Gospels, but through the whole New Testament. They present no other Christ than the One who saves by His death; and if

such an One is rejected by human reason or philosophy, there is no other which can be received.

I pass to a fifth argument. Even if we suppose that the Evangelists and the Apostles could be mistaken in attributing so much importance to the death of Jesus, *it is not possible for us to believe that His mission was misunderstood, or that His work for man was uncomprehended by the higher intelligences of Heaven.* Well, there was a time in Jesus' life when two persons from this higher realm came to the earth to meet the Saviour and to hold converse with Him. These two were Moses and Elias, — one, the founder of the old economy; and the other, its most distinguished reformer. These two met the Saviour and talked with Him, amid the light and the glory of the Transfiguration Mount.

And what was the subject which engaged the attention of these three, in this most wonderful congress? Talked they of empires, of revolutions, of wars, of philosophy, of philanthropic scenes, of the miracles of Jesus, of His mighty works? Did His teaching engage their thoughts? Spoke they of the mighty effects of this, — of the additions yet to be made to it? Not any nor all of these subjects received the notice of these celestial minds in this superior hour. Listen to the record: "Who appeared in glory and spake of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Not the teachings of the Saviour, not the beneficent influence of His life, not His acts of supernatural power, but the death that Jesus was soon to undergo, — this filled the hearts, this engaged

the tongues, of those who were fresh from the heavenly circle. Evidently, we have here given us the opinion entertained in the celestial world as to the necessity of Jesus' death ; and, according to it, this is decided, *nothing was completed of benefit for man without the death of Christ.* The cross was the culmination of Jesus' work. So Heaven thought, so its envoys spoke.

I pass to another argument. *Jesus always regarded His death as a necessary part of His great mission to the world.* "From that time forth," says Matthew, "began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." *From that time forth.* That is, Jesus began, thus early in His ministry, to teach the necessity of His death, and continued in His iteration of it. So also says Mark ; so also Luke. All the Evangelists represent Christ as early beginning to prepare His disciples for the death which must come. And when Peter — no doubt with the best intention — began to reply, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord : this shall not be unto Thee," the Saviour interrupted him with one of the severest rebukes ever uttered by Him : "Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art an offence unto me ; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." You take what is a low and an earthly view of my great work. You speak words which could come fitly only from the great enemy of man.

And now, my hearers, the question comes up, Did

Jesus understand Himself? Did He know for what purpose He came into the world? Did He comprehend His mission, and how it was to be accomplished? If not, how can any one of us believe in Him as a teacher? Shall we receive the words of a self-deluded man? And if He did understand Himself, why, then, there is no escape: we must receive the truth, that His death was essential, — a substantial, a necessary part of His work for us and the world.

I mention only one other argument, here, before I proceed to the practical use of this subject. This I find *in the attendant scenes of the great crucifixion.* Those three hours of unnatural darkness, — from twelve to three o'clock, — those three hours, in which neither man nor God was heard to speak, in which the spectators looked upon each other with blanched and ashen faces; those three hours, in which the sun hid his light, and Nature lay as under a funeral-pall; those three dark, still, awful hours in which the Saviour and Death met in conflict, — do not these point out the crucifixion, the passion of our Saviour, as an all-important, an essential, part of His great work? Can you look upon the cross, as it stands up amid that fearful darkness, and say, "Oh, the cross is nothing. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' gift to the world."

Then take the rending of the vail in the temple. This vail, as you know, hung before the holy of holies, separating it from the remainder of the temple. The high-priest entered it but once a year; and he never entered it without blood, which he sprinkled both for himself and the people. That is, every access to a

holy God, on the part of sinful man, resulted in death. This was the truth taught by the vail: *the high-priest died every time he entered the presence of God.* But so soon as Jesus dies, this vail parts in twain from the top to the bottom. But if Jesus' death was not an essential part of His work, if His blood was not necessary to salvation, why did the vail hang thick and dark until this blood was shed, and why did it part asunder so soon as this blood was poured out? My hearers, the lesson is plain: Jesus by His death procured for us what His life could not, — pardon, justification; free, safe access unto God.

In conclusion, let me say. First: this subject *is useful to teach the truth concerning the moral condition of man.* It does so by teaching what this condition calls for in the way of a remedy. From the nature of this remedy learn the character of the disease. Our salvation called for it; could not be accomplished except by the death of the Saviour. His teaching did not meet our great need. The power of His example was not sufficient for our restoration. His blood also was required. What, then, is sin? Weakness merely? Ignorance simply? Surely not. If this were all of our trouble, there was no need of the cross. All that the weak need is strength. All that the ignorant require is more instruction. The blood of sacrifice is related to neither of these classes. What, then, is the conclusion? Man is guilty as well as imperfect. There is wrath to come impending over this guilt, and there is no remission save through the shedding of blood.

Secondly: the truth brought out before us *is useful in testing Christian experience.* If the cross was an essential part of the Saviour's work, then it must ever be an essential part of all true religious life. It must be wrought into this life. By this truth, test the profession of the moralist: "I am doing as well as I can." "I strive daily to govern my life by the precepts of the Saviour, and I am sure that a loving God will not refuse to accept such a life." But, my hearer who art so trusting, what about the cross? Your theory of religion, your experience, has nothing to do with the cross. If you are right, then Jesus Christ might have stepped back into heaven so soon as He had preached the Sermon on the Mount. But Old Testament prophecy declared that He must die. The voice of the ancient sin-offering declares that He must die. The Evangelists all unite in the declaration, Jesus must die. Moses and Elias from Heaven give their testimony, and say the Saviour must die. Jesus Himself affirms, "I must die." Yet you say that you are endeavoring to govern your life by the precepts of the Saviour. You have never noticed the cross. Your religion has no use for its blood. Who is right, — you or the envoys from heaven; you or the Evangelists; you or the prophets; you or Christ Himself?

I beseech you, my hearer, make a way for, carry the crimson stream of sacrificial blood through the garden of your heart. After you have done the best, you are still a sinner; and from whence shall forgiveness come to you if not from a crucified Redeemer? What

can you do else with your sins, save to confess them upon the head of the Lamb of God?

Thirdly. This subject *is useful to teach us the true nature of faith in Christ.* It is reliance upon Christ as our sacrifice. Let us do our best in the way of living, and yet we cannot but feel that we are sinners still. And it is at this point that faith comes in. The conscious sinner offers unto God the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. He stands before the judgment-seat, while he says, "I am a sinner and Christ is my sacrifice. I plead guilty, and trust in His expiation."

"Nothing in my hand I bring:
Simply to the cross I cling."

This subject is further useful *in disclosing the nature of that hope which will not fail us in the hour of death.* As sure as we know that we are sinners to-day, so sure will we feel that we are sinners then. And when we shall come unto this hour, no sight will rejoice our hearts save the sight of the wondrous cross; and no hope support our souls save that which rests upon the sacrifice which was offered for the guilty upon that cross.

Brethren, immortals, sinners, — you, with a great multitude, stand before the cross at this hour. Oh, look ye upon its bleeding victim, and this hour own Him as your needed, as your all-sufficient, as your gladly received, sin-offering.

X.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

"The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." — Acts xx. 28.

I THINK you will all bear me witness, that, in my preaching of the Gospel unto you, I have never given to the Church or to any religious form or ceremony the place of first importance. To Christ as the only Saviour of men, and *to a good life*, as exemplified in his own career, and made the condition and test of discipleship to Him, — to these *great questions*, I have always endeavored to give all the emphasis which it was in my power to bestow. And I believe with all my heart, that, in this course and purpose, I am sustained by some of the strongest words which the Saviour Himself ever uttered, and by some of the clearest declarations ever made by His Apostles.

But, although from the beginning to the end of His earthly career, the Saviour uniformly laid the first and chiefest emphasis upon a good life; although it would be impossible for any one to mention a single statement of abstract truth, or a single rite or ceremony, which He declared necessary to salvation, — still it cannot be doubted, that, for those who would be His disciples, He has made it very clear that the

confession of His name must follow upon the *faith of His person;* that it is out of the question, and out of all possibility, that He should have such a thing as a secret following in this world; such a thing as a disciple who is unwilling to avow himself as such.

I have, therefore, thought it most proper upon this occasion, so closely preceding the communion Sabbath, — the day in which the Church receives the largest accessions to her number, — to call your attention to this subject, — THE CLAIMS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST UPON US AND UPON ALL MEN.

The first claim, here, *is founded in the language of Scripture upon the subject of the Church.* I do not believe that the Bible is High Church in this matter of the Church. It cannot possibly be that it is so; for it ever speaks of the *inward* as important above the *outward,* elevates the power of godliness above the mere form of it, curses Phariseeism and lip service, and elevates, without baptism or other church service, at least one distinguished sinner into the joy of paradise. Still, that the Bible has some very strong language on the subject of the Church is beyond a question. Take the statement of the text, "The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." Can you imagine a weightier testimony to the solemn importance, to the infinite value, of the Church? I am ready to confess that I cannot. And can you imagine that the Church, whose value must be estimated in these awful words, for which such a price was paid, has no claim upon your attention, upon your allegiance?

But take some other Scripture testimony upon this subject of the Church. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands: thy walls are continually before me." Think you, my hearers, that your God would so speak of the Church, if it were true that this Church had no claims upon your recognition, your love, and your loyalty? Can you believe it, that you may safely ignore these claims? Then God, your Heavenly Father, is dandling in His arms a beautiful, it may be, but a useless idol. He is self-deluded; pouring out His affection upon something which, you might inform Him, the world can get on very well without. Take one other Scripture testimony on this same point. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." Gave Himself for it. For what? For something which deserves nothing of you or me?

And still I must add one other declaration of Scripture in this connection. "And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Is it, then, that the Lord Jesus is vested with the supreme dominion of this world, that He may preside over the destinies of an institution which claims nothing of us, either in the way of love, or allegiance, or service? Has He been raised to the throne of this world for such a purpose as this? But I add no more. The argu-

ment is complete enough here. The Church is so presented in Scripture, as to give her a solemn claim upon the attention of every man who hopes for salvation through the work and name of the Lord Jesus.

The second claim of the Church upon the attention and allegiance of all who are disposed to live a Christian life *is founded in the relation of Christ to the Church.* It is quite certain that there is much in the Church, in the shape of both form and doctrine, for which no warrant can be found in the words of the Saviour. Church vestments, and church ceremonies, and the minute ramifications of church creeds, all come under this head. The art of ecclesiastical dressmaking was one quite unknown in the Saviour's day, and there is no hint to be found in His teaching as to its probable discovery. The theological art of making long creeds, although existing in His time among the Pharisees, was not by Him dealt with in any such way as to commend it to His followers. On the contrary, He tore in pieces the minute and elaborate glosses of the Pharisees, and left His disciples with the Word of God only in their hands.

It is certainly true, my hearers, that a vast deal of what now goes to make up the Church is of modern growth and quite foreign to the essence of this body. As upon an old vessel, so upon the Church in her navigation of the sea of Time, many barnacles have fastened, and these, so far from being a necessary part of the Church, do but oppose her power and impede her progress. Luther found so many and so foul excrescences, that he concluded to devote his life

to no other end than the removal of a few of them. And this, in great part, has made up the work of every reformer since his day. And if he can but dislodge a single one of these unnatural *impedimenta*, a modern bishop will not have moved his hand in vain.

But I am not here to speak to you of the claims of High Church or Low Church, of the Methodist, or Episcopal, or Presbyterian, or any other denomination or species of Churchism. The Bible knows of no such varied nomenclature. I am here only to speak of the claims of that Church which Christ has purchased with His blood. And I say, the Church in this sense was Christ's idea. He called His followers out from among men into a special relationship to Himself and to each other. His voice was, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." And by these words He constituted a Church. This declaration from His mouth was the enunciation of its organic law. And this special order, or class, or brotherhood, which He so organized in the world, He arranged to perpetuate. He provided that for ever men should publicly confess His name, acknowledge Him as Master and His word as law. He also devised and inaugurated *two rites*, which, for all time, should separate His people from the world, and bind them together in a compact and visible body.

The Church then, in this wide sense, is Christ's plan. He announced its fundamental law and central rites; and then, through His own inspired Apostles, perfected its organization, and set it in motion. And this, in brief, is the foundation of the Church's claim upon all

those who acknowledge the mission of Christ, and who hope for good and blessing through Him. The Church is Christ's own arrangement, and to reject the Church is to reject Christ Himself; and to reject Christ is to rely upon a plan of self-salvation: for surely no man has any right to expect that Christ will save him upon any other conditions, or in any other way, than these announced by the Saviour Himself.

I mention a third claim which the Church has upon your allegiance. It is this: The Apostles, under the immediate direction of Christ, and in possession of the Spirit which He bestowed upon them, at once set up the Church, at once began to use it *as the school, the home, the sanctuary of the disciples* whom they called.

That little band in the upper room at Jerusalem, gathered together in the name of Christ, and waiting for the Spirit, was the Christian Church in her perfected and distinct capacity. And no sooner did others, through their words, believe on Christ, than they were formally added to this organization. "And the Lord added unto the Church daily such as should be saved," is the record of the first triumphs of the Gospel. And when Peter, in obedience to a special summons, went to preach the Gospel to Cornelius, did he regard his work as done when the Roman officer gave in his adhesion to the Christian system? By no means. He went beyond this, and baptized the centurion. The believer in Jesus, he counted a member of the Church. So, when Paul kneeled to Jesus, he was also baptized.

And so throughout all that early period of the Church's history. Apostles made use of the Church which Christ had founded. And shall any one in view of this fact say, "I will be a Christian outside of the Church? I tell you, the Apostles who had been baptized by the Spirit from Heaven knew of no such thing as a Christian willingly outside the Church of Christ. And to-day, and for evermore, where the same Saviour is preached, and the same Spirit calls, there is no such thing.

But I present the claims of the Church in another light still. There is *nothing so distinctly characteristic of the Christian life as the spirit of obedience.* This is the very essence of Christian character. It is better than any form of sacrifice. It is more precious than any species of will-worship.

"What wilt thou have me to do?" is the voice which comes out of the very essence of every Christian life. "My Lord and my God," is the confession which the accepted Saviour lifts up out of every new-born heart. No matter what we say, no matter what we think we have felt, unless we are willing to obey Christ we have no evidence that we are Christians. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "Obedience is better than sacrifice." And here is the duty of Church membership, about which the Bible speaks most plainly. Unless you are willing here to go forward, to obey the words of Jesus, no matter what else you are willing to do, you cannot be His disciple. It is enough that He has spoken. If we cannot trust His mission in this matter, and bow to His

authority, it is a poor kind of faith that we have in the Saviour. It is as though you should say unto Him, "I believe in you, but you have made a great mistake in this one matter. I will follow you, but there is one of your requirements to which I cannot yield. You are my Saviour; but I must be allowed to have my own way in this matter of the Church."

But there is one other view which I desire you to take of this matter. *Christ gains men through men.* This is in its widest sense the ordinance of preaching. It is man saying unto his fellow-man, "Come, come to Jesus." And the widest possible, the most continuous, and the most forcible kind of preaching, is preaching by example. It is when Christ is held up in the human life that He is seen and admired and believed in. But how can we thus testify for Christ, how can we thus preach Him to the world, if we refuse to place ourselves in a Christian attitude before the eyes of the world?

Take this case to exemplify. Many of you have thus far refused to confess the name of Jesus. You are known as not being members of His Church. In which direction now, honestly, do you believe your influence tends? To draw your fellow-men, your friends, your neighbors unto Christ? or to keep them away from the Saviour? Ask your neighbor, ask your friend, ask your child, who is looking unto you, and following in your steps. Ask them this question: Has my example emphasized to you the importance of the Christian life? Has it been an argument to lead you to the Saviour? Ask the ques-

tion, and see what answer you will get. But I can tell you even now. You will get this reply: "Your example has reassured me in my neglect of religion. I think if you had confessed Christ it would have required a much greater struggle on my part to put off the great matter."

Yes, my hearers, just so long as you remain in your present attitude, just so long are you incapable of acquitting yourselves of the most solemn obligation that rests upon human life, — the obligation of leading those around you unto Christ. Just so long as you remain in your present attitude, just so long are you a stumbling-block in the path of others, a hinderance to the success of the Gospel, and your life a perpetual despoiling of the Saviour, — robbing Him of the travail of His soul. This is a serious matter and a solemn charge to bring against you, I know. But I remember well how the example of just such as you weighed me down and kept me back from the Saviour many a year. And I cannot, in the name of my own experience, and in the name of the endangered souls around you to-day, give too vehement expression to the fact of your most solemn criminality. I recall also the words of Scripture which are my justification and your condemnation. "Ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

And so, without dwelling upon the necessity of the Church to your own personal safety, the matter of Church membership stands before you. The Scriptures could not give stronger or more solemn affir-

mation of the necessity and importance of the Church. This Church has been provided by Christ Himself, is an institution of His own most perfect wisdom and measureless love. It has also been under His own immediate direction, and through all time, as the school, the home, the sanctuary of His followers. Duty to it, membership in it, rest upon no other authority than that of His own plain and unmistakable words; while at the same time, it furnishes the best possible, the only sure, condition for the safe and salutary exercise of personal influence. Such is the solemn array of her claims with which the Church of Christ meets you to-day. Such are the arguments with which she calls you unto the solemn and irrevocable confession of the Saviour.

I advert now, and but briefly, to the objections with which, as with so many arguments, it is common to meet and to postpone, if not to reject, these claims of the Church.

The first is this: *There are in the Church many who give no evidence of Christian character, and who are making no progress in the direction of Christ.* This is true, sadly and emphatically true. But there are two answers ready to meet this objection, either of which is quite sufficient to destroy its force. In the first place, Christ never declared that His Church was to be a perfect body. By the express prophecy and permission of His own words, the *tares* grow with the wheat until the day of harvest. To object, then, that the Church contains many bad lives within her communion is only to say that it is just what the Saviour

declared it would be. And the second and all-sufficient answer to this objection is, that because another makes a mock of duty it is no reason why you should altogether neglect it. Sure I am, my hearers, that this objection will give you poor comfort in the day when the Saviour will deny, before the Father and the holy angels, those who denied Him here. To share your doom with all lip-servers and hypocrites will not make it any the more tolerable.

A second objection with which the claims of the Church are met is something like this: *I can live a good life outside the Church.* Perhaps you can. And if your own goodness is your hope for eternal life, I have not another word to say. But if, on the other hand, your hope for such eternity is in Christ, then the case is all changed. For, to despise the Church is to despise the blood with which it was purchased; and surely no one can do this, and, at the same time, rest upon Christ for salvation.

But do you say, *I cannot agree with all the doctrines of the Church.* What doctrines, pray? I know of no Church which makes the reception of all the articles of its creed a condition of membership. Certainly, ours does not. By the highest authority within our Church we are expressly forbidden to make any such condition. The Presbyterian Church does not ask of her members a profession of Calvinism, but a profession of Christ. She does not say to the applicant for membership, "What is your view of election?" But, "What think ye of Christ?" An Arminian is just as free to come within our Church as a Calvinist.

We will admit one who believes in immersion just as freely as one who believes in sprinkling. In other words, the Church does not impose her confession of faith upon her private members. If, for special reasons, an individual prefers to join our Church, although not sympathizing with our theology, we say to such an applicant, "Theology does not guard our Church-door, but Christ; and if you receive Him you are free to enter."

A professed trust in Christ for salvation, and a promise to live a Christian life, make up the one condition of Church membership. And what is there here which you cannot receive? Is it the idea of redemption through Christ, future good and blessing received only through Him? Is it the doctrine that human life must be governed by the life and the words of the Saviour? Are these the doctrines which you cannot receive? If so, then learn and know that you are no rejecter of creeds, but that you are a rejecter of the Gospel, and have no right to a place in this or any other Christian Church. The Church, from the nature of the case, cannot admit infidels, free-thinkers, or humanitarians. Neither can it open its doors to those who are false and wicked and corrupt in their lives. As the Church of Christ, it is for Christians, — for those who believe in the Saviour and are willing to follow Him. Every such one is free to enter. The question of Church membership is not one of doctrine at all.

But yet again, do you say, *I have no experience?* If by this you mean that you lack some inward impulse

or feeling, or change, and that it is impossible for you to enter upon the Christian life, you state what cannot be true. For the Word of God distinctly declares, "Whosoever *will* may come." There is not one of you who might not this day commence a life of obedience to God if you *chose* to do so.

But, perhaps you say, *I am not fit to be a Church member.* This objection, *first* of all, may be fact. There are those who are determined to live this present life just as they please, without regard to Christ or conscience, and who do not care for what lies beyond. Such, of course, are fit only for membership with devils. In such communion they are even now. *Secondly*, this objection, "I am not fit," may be a plea of simulated humility in order to get rid of duty. The man says, "I am not fit," because *he is not willing.* And here the answer to him is, "Thou hast lied, not unto men, but unto God." *Thirdly*, this objection may be the expression of a true consciousness of imperfection. And here it is a mistake. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Confession of Christ does not proclaim us *good;* but its voice is, "I am a sinner who needs a Saviour." Those, therefore, who are most conscious of their own weakness and shortcomings and sins are most fit to profess the name of Him who came to seek and to save the lost.

But I must stop here with these two remarks: First, *the amazing character of men's indifference here.* Christ says, "Behold my Church, for which I gave my blood!" And men heed not the call, pass the Church by without notice. How many to whom I

speak have for years and years, with the utmost unconcern, ignored all the claims which this blood-bought Church has upon them! And this too while they are going straight forward to Him who loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Ah! my hearers, there will be a sorry ending some day of all this contemptuous unconcern.

Secondly, *these words of invitation.* Again the Church, through the blood by which she has been purchased, speaks unto you, asking for your attention, for your allegiance.

What shall be your answer? I beseech you let not your unwillingness, let not your unconcern, let not your unreadiness, let not a sense of shame, let not a feeling of timidity, be, in any of your cases, a hand to smite her in the face. For remember, oh! remember, that the Church is blood-bought and blood-sprinkled; and that the hand, which is stretched forth to smite her, rudely and impiously stains itself in those crimson drops which are the sinner's only hope.

XI.

THE SPRING-TIME CALL.

"FOR LO! THE WINTER IS PAST, THE RAIN IS OVER AND GONE; THE FLOWERS APPEAR ON THE EARTH; THE TIME OF THE SINGING OF BIRDS IS COME, AND THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE IS HEARD IN OUR LAND; THE FIG-TREE PUTTETH FORTH HER GREEN FIGS, AND THE VINES WITH THE TENDER GRAPE GIVE A GOOD SMELL. ARISE, MY LOVE, MY FAIR ONE, AND COME AWAY." — Song of Solomon ii. 11, 12, 13.

THIS is Christ's spring-time call unto HIS BRIDE, — THE CHURCH.

No Church, of course, has propounded to herself the theory, that all revivals of religion must occur during the winter months. From such a naturalistic hypothesis, the Christian consciousness of every denomination would instantaneously revolt. The whole Christian world would join in crying down a theory so narrow, so materialistic, and so absurd. And yet, although this theory has never been announced in so many words, it is to be feared that it is to a very deplorable extent influencing the mind, and directing the activity, of very many Christian churches. But whether distinctly announced or unconsciously followed, it is to be reprobated by all who would cultivate and disseminate an intelligent view of religion as a life-governing, life-shaping principle. Nothing

too severe can be said against such a narrow and unconsidered view of religion as would shut up within any one part of the year all its marked and important manifestations in the life of Christians, or which would fix the birth-time of souls between the autumnal and the vernal equinox. All this is gross and narrrow, and greatly provocative of sneers and reviling.

Religion is a life, and life is continuous and connected, developing. A man might as well set aside three months of the year in which to do his breathing for the whole twelve, as a Christian to set aside the winter months for Christ's service. Or think of a man fixing upon one day of the week in which to do all the eating necessary in the seven, and you have a fair picture of the Christian or the church which attempts to secure sufficient grace in winter to last the year round. Christian experience fed in this way will prove like the manna when it was kept over: it will grow stale, will breed worms and stink.

And to hedge in soul-births between autumn and spring is just as unreasonable as would be the shutting up within the same period all natural births. There is no law or principle which calls for the uniformity in the one case more than in the other. But the law of natural and beautiful increase to the Church, as of the individual Christian life, is *daily accretion*. Christ's mystical body — which is the Church — grows as did the one which came out of Mary's womb, with beautiful evenness and continuity. The

Omnipotent Spirit which is in the world, and whose breath is the life of immortal souls, breathes upon and throughout the valley of dry bones, as breathes the wind along many of the sea-courses, *continually*.

But although all this be true, and although the procession of the spiritual forces is altogether above and independent of the precession of the equinoxes, still is it true, that each succeeding season comes to the world with a new and peculiar influence. Spring has a different language from winter. She stirs different forces within the human frame. She evokes different feelings within the human heart. She hath a gladsome voice, and her step is altogether light and joyous. And men change under her influence; then they will come to bear the impress of summer's hand, and then again grow sad and contemplative with autumn. And the Christian lives in this world and under these varying influences; and they, like all the multiform forces which he feels, should prove religious, — favoring breezes to swell the sails of his Christian life; drawing powers to draw towards happiness and peace, and purity and God. Hence Christ's exhortation to His Church in the text. It is redolent with savor of the spring. It hath its emphasis from the beautiful setting of the vernal season. "Lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell." So, through the midst of this beautiful theory of spring's attendants, — through flowers, through

music, through fragrance, — comes the voice of Christ to His Church: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Let us dwell for a time upon these words this morning, constituting, as they do, *Christ's spring-time call unto His Church*, — or Christ's voice unto His Church, as it is borne unto her through the voice of the spring. First of all, He calls unto her through the *beauty* of the spring-time. His exhortation hath for its emphasis, or one of its most beautiful settings, the blossoming flowers. Arise, come away, for the flowers appear on the earth.

The earth no doubt was in the great beginning far more beautiful than it is now. No scorched and barren Sahara then glistened upon its surface. No mildew rested upon its fields. No hurricane prostrated its forests. The bolt of lightning did not shoot its vengeance from the piled-up cloud; nor the earthquake overthrow and bury the habitations of men. Earth wore then no scar, no blemish. Fair throughout all her parts, she was the mirror of God's glory; and, looking upon the work of His hands, the Great God pronounced it good.

Since that day a change dark and fearful has come over the surface of our globe. Sin has come down like night upon it. Sin, with rough and unsparing hand, has mutilated it. It has strewed the surface with glistening sands. It has filled the atmosphere with pestilential vapors. It has made the forests lairs for devouring beasts; and with the storms of heaven's fury, and the angrier, fiercer storms of human passion,

it has scarred and scarified the whole surface of our globe. Yes, sin has entered, and sin has defiled the world. But yet, as in the angry face of the sky when black clouds march and countermarch across it, and when its whole depth is one uneasy, restless, tumbling, frowning mass, like a storm-whipped sea, you can observe now and then a line of light, a smile of beauty gleaming out between beetling cloud-monsters, so in the earth, amid all the defilement and ruin of sin, there are traces of the original, and prophecies of the pledged future, glory of the earth.

Among these there is none more prominent, none fuller of beautiful testimony to what our earth was at first, or of sweeter prophecy of what it shall be one day again, than the flower. Scattered throughout the earth ; blooming now upon mountain top, and now in deepest gorge ; now lifting up its tiny form from out the crevasses of the ice fields, and now painting itself in gorgeous hues beneath a tropical sun ; now blooming in lonely desert, where no eye save that of God may note its beauty, and now upon the beaten thoroughfare lifting up its spiritual face beneath the rude gaze of the passers-by ; now, in rich profusion, heaped upon the casket of death until its ghastliness is well-nigh abolished, and now, in wreaths of orange and snow, lending the last charm and grace to animated beauty, — the flower, wherever it blooms, is a smile of God lingering upon the earth ; the most delicate earthly blossoming of that spirit of beauty which God has breathed into all the works of His hand.

And spring is full of flowers. She stretches forth

her wand over the earth, and forthwith they start up in innumerable ranks of loveliness. She calls with her voice, and they come trooping in beautiful array to her side. She cries out that the winter is gone, and assured of safety, as an angel ambuscade, they lift up their smiling faces over all the earth. She breathes with the breath of the south wind over field and garden, and at once they rise up from their wintry graves, their spirits of life laden with ten thousand odors.

And so God calls unto men through the voice of the spring; for this is the voice of flowers and of beauty. Sin is defilement; sin is deformity. It has defaced the earth; it has defaced the soul of man. In its wake are found wreck, ruin, and all unsightliness. It hath no beauty that men should desire it. It does them harm, and only harm. It strikes a schism through their nature. It grinds them down, and goads them on to activities unworthy of them. It compels them with earth-bent vision to rake up worthless straws, while a crown is hanging over their heads. It degrades an immortal being into a life only fit for the brutes that perish. It breathes upon, and poisons with its breath, the purest affections, the brightest hopes, the sweetest joys of the human heart. It fills this heart with all manner of evil thoughts, — with thefts, adulteries, wrath, strife, hatreds, envyings, murders, revellings, and such like, — bearing these from hell to do it with. It blotches and scars and disfigures God's own image, until all traces of its original glory are hopelessly blotted out.

And from all this God would call away, — call away through the voice of the beauty of the spring-time. With the beauty which is external He would call unto that which belongs to the soul, and which is the *beauty of holiness*. As, then, during the coming days, and amid the opening glories of the spring-time, your nature shall feel the softening influence, and flow out in warmer and swifter currents towards the lovely, the beautiful, and the good, know that all this is the voice of your Saviour speaking unto you, and saying, "Arise, come away." As He scares with the earthquake, and terrifies with the whirlwind, and appals with the pestilence, so also in the kindlier and gentler influence of the beautiful spring He is present, and present to win the human soul unto Himself. Open, then, your eyes upon the myriad beauties which the renewing Spirit is now calling forth. Open your heart to the gentle and purifying influences which, at this season of the year, fill the air; for they will do you good and not evil. They will have for you a voice from God speaking of the beauty which is *unfading*, — the *beauty of holiness*, which blossoms perennially in the world above.

Secondly: The call of the Saviour is through the *joy* of the spring-time. There is joy in the vernal season as well as beauty; and this joy is made the organ of the Saviour's call: "The time of the singing of birds is come. Arise, my love, and come away."

Nothing is more characteristic of spring than joy. It is the very atmosphere in which it bathes. Joy! Why, it murmurs in every unfettered and sparkling brook that runs laughing to the river. It is heard in

the morning orchestra which arises from every grove and forest. It drops in fragrance from every unfolding flower ; runs in that liquid life which is creeping upward along ten thousand wooden arteries to array whole forests in their coronal of leaves. The joy of spring ! Why, the lambkins feel it as they gambol upon the pasture hill-side. Children feel it as they swarm upon the pavements and fill the streets with the music of their merry voices. And old men feel it too, and their limbs grow more supple, and the blood, which winter's cold had chilled, begins to flow in quicker currents through the veins. You cannot walk along the city parks on any of these beautiful evenings without feeling that spring means joy. You can see it upon faces ; you can hear it in voices. It permeates the atmosphere ; it radiates ; it is distilled.

In the text this joy is indexed *by the singing of the birds,* — perhaps the clearest and sweetest voice in which spring-time expresses her joy. There is no use in attempting a description of bird singing, much less an eulogium. The voices of these songsters are the sweetest that earth knows of. They are tremulous with a spiritual delight which cannot be interpreted. And when spring comes, when invited by the bright face of the returning sun they recommence their matin services, they flood the earth with pure ecstatic joy, pour out a tide of melody, to enjoy which it would seem that the unseen and ministering angels must pause in their path of service. Bird voices are the only ones which do not grow harsh and inflexible through disuse. They seem all the sweeter and fuller and richer from their winter's rest.

And now, my hearers, it is through this universal joy that God speaks unto you to-day, calling you unto Himself. He speaks unto you as the source and giver of this joy. As the sun is the light-fountain, so God is the joy-fountain of the universe. It streams from Him to the remotest bounds of His realm. It flows, as the river of life, from underneath His immutable throne out, out to the most distant circumference. As the Creator of all things, He is the Author of all the joy which fills the world, and which meets in a royal crown upon the head of spring. Birds sing because He, the Good One, has created them so full of joy that they cannot help but sing. The waters laugh in the sunshine, and join in merry music as they flow, because He has made the sun so bright and water so clear. Children disport themselves in the streets, and fill the air with their merry voices, because children are fresh from God, — freshly filled with joy at an infinite fountain. God is the joy of this world. Were He not good, not a song would this world ever hear, nor ever see a smile. Were He not good the merry songster would cease from his matins, and the flocks from their gambols, and children would forget to play.

My hearers, the Good God speaks to you in all and through all the joy of the spring-time. All this joy is but a new revelation of Himself to our world. It is His coming back to us, as comes the sun back to the polar winter. Receive, then, the joy of the season. Drink deep draughts of it, for it flows from the spring, — your Father's love! But, oh, forget not the Giver

in the gift! Forget not the joy-fountain, while you bathe yourself in the joy-streams! While gladness streams into your heart, let grateful love flow out from it and upward. And, oh! if perchance you are a dissonant, jarring being within this world of joy and gladness; if the waves of the spring-time joy, as they roll over this world, reach not your dry and thirsty and unhappy heart, — still is the voice of the Saviour unto you through all this unshared flood, which, Tantalus like, you reach after, but may not drink. Listen to His words, "Arise, come away." God has the joy which you need also, — enough for all your cravings, and to fill you too. Pray Him that by His renewing Spirit He would create spring-time within your soul, and fill you with this joy of His which rolls and flows throughout His being and throughout His realm.

Thirdly: the call of the text is unto men through *the fruitful life* of the spring. "The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines, with the tender grape, give a good smell."

What we have thus far noticed, — the *beauty* and the *joy* of spring, — these are only the flying banners and the music of the reawakened forces of Nature. While the flowers are blooming and the birds are singing, the juices of a fruitful life are pushing their way along the arteries of ten thousand vines; quickening and stirring within myriad plants which are to bear the bread of life for earth's millions. The spring is the period of newly forming, budding, bursting life. The winter is that of stationariness. All the forces

of Nature are then locked up into winter quarters. The river and the lake are frozen into a mute stillness. The living sap and juices are magazined in roots beneath the ground. The million forms of insect life lie torpid in the nooks and crannies. And spring comes, as the trumpet note, to all of these myriad forms of life. The waters hear it, and begin to flow; the sap and living juices hear it, and begin their march upward; insects, numerous as the blades of grass, hear it, and begin to rub the winter nap from their eyes. Spring sounds her trumpet, and life — busy, moving, growing life — springs into ranks throughout the earth.

The winter has been the night of Nature, and with spring comes the morning, in which, as in a gradually awakening city, begins the hum of life, swelling louder and louder into the full activity of mid-day. Spring is life from the dead; resurrection, reanimation, restoration. And God speaks through it as such, proclaiming Himself as the *Life-giver*, and through it He also calls for *life* within His followers. Some of you, it may be, have been hibernating in the Church: you have not been dead, but torpid; hoping little, feeling little, doing little. Locked in with the ice of formality, bound by the frosts of an empty profession, your Christian life has long been in winter-quarters. If so, let the voice of the Saviour come to you through the voice of the spring, to unloose your death-bands, to set free, and then into motion, all the vital forces of your moral being. Come away; leave your winter-quarters; throw off their imprisonment, their con-

straint, their dull routine. Forth into the field where your Saviour calls; go, to ramble with Him through the flowery fields and beside the still waters. Drink of the fulness of a spiritual spring-time. Dare to hope more, to attempt more, to enjoy more. Let all the fulness of your being flow out towards the Saviour, who loves you with an everlasting love.

The spring is the time for fresh feeling, for new resolves, for more buoyant hopes. Let it be so in your spiritual life. Pray the Holy Spirit to pour throughout your nature His living tide. Up, and into your daily life, let it rise, until it shows there in ripe and golden fruit. If you can love more, hope more, enjoy more, amid the beauty and the joy of spring, why, let these forces of your being go out unchecked to the Saviour, who waits for your love, in which all your hopes may be fulfilled.

My hearers, each succeeding and beautiful spring-time is but an image and a type of that glorious and general spring-time which awaits the Church and the world in redemption's future. Nothing shall be lost, — not a noble thought, not a high resolve, not the music of a sweet and pure affection. The prophecy of each recurring spring does sing, —

> "That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroyed,
> Or cast, as rubbish, to the void,
> When God has made the pile complete."

"What is sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption."

"What is sown in dishonor shall be raised in glory."

"What is sown in weakness shall be raised in power."

"The day cometh when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God."

The winter of the grave hath its spring. Over every cherished urn which holds the ashes of His departed followers shall the life-giving Saviour yet bend, and speak the loving words of His spring-time call, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Then immortal beauty, immortal joy, immortal life!

May God bring us all unto such a spring-time.

XII.

BIRTH AND TRAINING OF MOSES.

"AND SHE CALLED HIS NAME MOSES." — Exodus ii. 10.

FIRST. Two general remarks.

The wonderful clearness of Bible portraits. Some of the pictures of the men whom the world has united in calling masters are well-nigh indistinguishable. They are like an old manuscript which you must study out word by word. So you must hunt for individual features upon these faded canvas pages. The colors of the artist once so glorious are now dim, blurred by the hand of the centuries. The perspective once so wondrous has flattened out into a dead surface. Men may call it one of the old masters. And, if by this language they mean that the picture was painted long ago, the observation is most sensible and just.

But now turn to the biographical gallery of the Bible. Remember that some of the portraits which you look upon — as, for instance, that of Abraham, that of Moses, that of Job — are fifty centuries old. Yes, were painted thousands of years before the oldest of the masters saw the light. And yet notwithstanding this, their great age, how distinct they are! Look at the features of Abraham for instance. How they

stand out from the sacred page! how life-like they are! If we ever meet the old patriarch, do you not think that we shall know him from this picture? So, too, of the portrait of the great Elijah. Of him, as he is sketched for us, can be said as was said of Moses in his old age, "His eye is not dim, nor his natural force abated." We can still see him, as with a withering curse upon his lips he rushes into the presence of the king. We can still hear him as he mocks the false prophets in this shrill and bitter irony: "Cry aloud, for he is a god; peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened."

Infer from all this, my hearers, the wonderful imperishableness of the colors in which these Bible portraits were laid. Infer from it also this sublime truth, "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

A second general remark. *The superior dignity and glory of the human life.* Where now is the city Cain builded? Where is there any record of the musical instruments fashioned by the hands of Jubal? or those masterpieces of brass and iron wrought by the skill of Tubal-Cain? What about the civil movements of that far-off day? its political revolutions? its astronomical and geographical discoveries? its progress in agriculture, merchandise, navigation? its food, dress, fashions, honors, wealth? Who knows any thing about these? Who cares any thing about them? They are all, as if they had never been. Ah! my hearers, — all these are but

the accidents of human life, its casual garments. They drop off; they perish: but the life itself, this endures, this is immortal. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, — these names stand for enduring entities. Upon another plane of being, clad in other garments, living actors in other scenes, they to-day invite our attention, and interest our thoughts.

Learn from this, that it is human life fashioned by the Divine Artificer, and in His own image, which is the noblest thing altogether in this world. Every thing else is only subsidiary; every thing else has its importance from its connection with man, the head.

I turn now to my subject, — THE BIRTH AND TRAINING OF MOSES.

First. The *time of the birth.* Pharaoh's Joseph had gone. His bones only were now in Egypt, — a poor part of any man. So had Joseph's Pharaoh gone, and the mantle of his name rested upon a successor. From the mighty throne of Egypt this successor had spoken, and this was his command: "Every son that is born of the Hebrews ye shall cast into the river." And so Moses was doomed before he was born. "From his mother's womb to the waters of the Nile," ran the decree. And Moses did go to the Nile, but in God's way, — not in Pharaoh's, — as we shall see.

Take next under this head, — the *goodliness, the beauty of the child.* "And when she — the mother — saw that he was a goodly child." What true mother ever saw her child as any thing else? Those

little ones that went to the Nile, both before and after the birth of Moses, were they not goodly too, — beautiful in the eyes of love, — beautiful to those who by them had been taught the deepest and purest and sweetest experience of human life?

An infant child. Is there any thing more beautiful? Look at its little hands. Can any sculptor match them? Behold the light of its eyes. Does any flower of earth open up with such a glory? Look upon the rose, the lily, the violet, as they first open their eyes upon this world. Ah! there is no such light in any of them.

> "Where did you get your eyes so blue?
> Out of the heavens as I came through.
> Where did you get this pearly ear?
> God spake, and it came out to hear."

A man is far gone, — a woman farther, — when the child which comes to them — the immortal clasp of their two hearts — is not beautiful in their sight. Earth has no honor so great as the parentage of an immortal; Heaven no higher dignity.

But in Moses' case beauty was to reach unto an end nobler than itself. It was to fill the mother's heart with a subtler strategy, with a bolder daring. It was to fascinate the eyes of a princess. It was to win its way to Pharaoh's presence. It was to work the deliverance of a mighty nation. It was to alter the current of the world's history. It was to be one of the mighty powers of all time, — this *goodliness* of the child.

So beauty, when not abused, ever beyond itself

reaches unto a noble end. With his own hand the Divine Limner paints them, and then cries, "Consider the lilies of the field." So He draws His brush across the western sky and over the landscape, and fascinates the eyes of man. And this beauty of the sunset, of the landscape and the flower, fruits in the human life. It emphasizes purity, it lifts up towards God. Ah, mothers! be not so anxious to keep your child from the looking-glass as to teach her that she holds a noble gift from God in that face, in that form, of hers. Try not to keep her ignorant of her beauty. This is impossible, even if it were desirable, and it is not right. Teach her rather to hold her beauty as so much power subordinate to the high and holy aims of duty. God, who distributes His gifts severally as He will, grants to one of His servants intellect, to another this goodliness of person. Both are talents. Both should be recognized and used as such. And for both must an account be rendered.

Consider next. The *exposed and endangered condition of the babe.* For a while the mother hid him; hid him from the eyes of Pharaoh and his minions. But the powers that be have many eyes. This is the way the thrift which follows fawning often grows. Mean, little souls listen at the crack of the door; peep out of the corners into which they have crawled; see what they see, hear what they hear, and then run with it to their master. He says, "Faithful slave, devoted dog," and they are happy. Where Moses was hid we know not. But of this we may rest assured, — the mother would have been willing to cut

open her heart if she could there have hidden her goodly child. But underneath a despotic throne so full of eyes she could not long conceal her child. And so, soon the hour came when it was not longer possible for mother-love to triumph in this way. "And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein, and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink."

Did ever mother launch such a craft before? Ay, often. Every day they do it. Every day, every hour, some mother is committing her child to the currents of this world, than which the waters of the Nile were not more cruel. Think of harlotry, the painted devil. Think of intemperance, the destroying fiend. Think of dishonor, the consuming fire. Are not these worse than all the crocodiles that ever opened jaw in river of earth? And yet must they do it? Upon the angry surface of this world's danger, must mothers launch their hopes; their only consolation being, — God is strong, and a Father to defend.

I can imagine the mother of Moses weaving her little ark of bulrushes. Love makes her hands to be full of skill as ever shipbuilder's were. Now she daubs it with slime, and with pitch within. Now she takes the little boy, — *her* little boy, — and lays him (God strengthen the trembling hands) into the little craft. And now, one more look, — one more kiss, — and still *one, one, one* more, and the beautiful boy is resting among the flags, and the mother is out of sight (the sister must watch, she cannot), awaiting

the result. So mothers now. The ark which they make is the covenant with their God; its lining, the world-resisting element of a mother's prayers; and then with eyes that cannot see for tears, and with heart-strings breaking, they push forth their little craft, — their heart's hope, — their world. And now may God defend the boy, for the mother may not, — cannot longer.

We come now to the discovery of the child. Egypt's princess, Pharaoh's daughter, comes down to the river to bathe, accompanied by her retinue of maidens. She catches sight of the strange cradle among the flags; she sends one of her maidens to fetch it; with her own hand she opens it; she beholds the babe; the child weeps; the woman's heart within the princess is conquered; the child is saved.

But I pass to the second part of our subject, — the TRAINING of Moses. Note the elements of this.

First. *He had his mother.* It either was not safe for her to do so, or else she could not bear it, to remain within sight of that little ark which she had launched upon the waters of the Nile. So the mother retires. But she posts a sentinel, — her own daughter, Moses' sister. "And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him." This watcher beholds the princess as she walks down to the river's brink. She sees when a maid is despatched for the little ark cradle. In a moment she is in the presence of Pharaoh's daughter. "This is one of the Hebrews' children," says the princess, looking in upon the child. "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the

Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?" speaks the child's sister. "And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman [who was the mother] took the child, and nursed it."

I'll warrant you, my hearers, that here was a nurse easy to engage, one who did not stop to higgle over the offered wages. And yet she would not wish to disclose her secret to the princess; and so we must imagine her, not rushing back in breathless haste to receive her child, but, with compressed breath and beating heart, endeavoring to assume an ordinary gait, yet walking with steps that scarcely touched the ground. And when she received her child from the princess she would not cry, she would not laugh; the swelling currents of a mother's heart she would dam up, even if their fulness was like to suffocation.

But her charge received, how she would hasten from under the sight of strange eyes to be alone with her boy! Picture to yourselves the sight, as with her priceless charge she enters her own home, and closes the door upon the world. Sure I am, if Pharaoh's daughter could have glanced into that home just then, she would have thought that she had happened upon a most excellent nurse. "Very affectionate, surely," she would have said, "and I hope she has judgment." Yes, princess; never fear. Your nurse has excellent judgment, too. Her strange love will make her very wise. This was the first element of Moses' training.

He had his mother. A human life, like any other life, needs training. And for this work there is no one like the mother. Interest makes her wise. Love makes her unwearying.

Did the children of Israel at this time, slaves as they were, gather together in the hour of twilight or of deeper darkness, to tell over the story of their wrongs? Did they whisper these to each other as they met upon the street, or labored together in the field? Were they accustomed to point to that "hated throne"? If so, all this story would filter through a mother's heart into the mind of the growing child. She would tell it him as he lay upon her lap. She would sing it to him as she rocked him to sleep. Talk it to him as he played about the house. The sympathetic instinct between mother and child would be a syphon, through which, with every hour of the day would flow the story of Israel's bitter wrong.

And did the promise of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob, linger in the darkened minds of their enslaved descendants, keeping hope alive there, and the expectation of deliverance? If so, with this hope the mother would feed the mind and fill the heart of her growing boy. With the word *freedom*, she would daily stir his ambition. The prosperity, the joy, the glory reserved for the Hebrews, she would paint upon his youthful imagination in colors which would never grow dim.

And more than this. It would seem, from a passage of Scripture in the New Testament, that Moses' parents had some intimation of the great mission of

their child. If so, how faithfully, how proudly, how lovingly, she would train the boy! how faithfully she would earn the wages paid her by Pharaoh's daughter! "I am training Israel's future deliverer:" this would make her motherhood grand. She would rise above the commonplace, and grow great in her effort to be worthy of her high responsibility. The mother of Israel's avenger would nurse her child as if she lived in a palace and walked a queen.

The child from the Nile could never have grown to the Moses whom we know, had he been taken at once to the palace. He needed to see the throne of Pharaoh from the stand-point of the oppressed. He needed identification with the people whom he was to deliver. He needed that to which so many of this world's heroes owed their greatness, — a mother. And this he had. This was the first element of his greatness.

The second was *his home in the palace of Pharaoh.* "And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son." The mother had had her child long enough; for he was not to be a common Hebrew, not just one more slave added to the gangs in the field. He was to *break* the chains of slavery, not to be *bound* by them. Therefore he must be lifted up to the greatness of his work.

Two most necessary elements of preparation he gained by going into the home of the Pharaoh. The first was *knowledge.* Moses, we read, was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. And this he got as

the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. Good impulses, a noble spirit, is not enough. Knowledge is power, and necessary power, save when God works by miracles. Therefore Moses was homed in the palace. His mother had given him character, inspiration, stirred him with an impulse which he shall never forget. Now he goes to receive the knowledge which shall make this inspiration, not so much mere goodness, but so much power. He goes *to study* the throne which he is yet to shake. Out of Pharaoh's armory he will gird himself for the coming contest with Pharaoh.

Then again. His residence at court would serve *to impress him with the immense power with which the Hebrews contended*, and the heel of which was upon their necks. This his humble mother could scarcely give him. She could tell him the story of the black and bitter wrong; but she could hardly give him an idea of the mighty enginery which upheld and perpetuated this injustice. And yet he must know this, or he will not be prepared for his work. So he goes into the palace, — goes to stand by the side of that mighty wheel of despotism, every turn of which was echoed to by the groans of a whole nation. And so the palace, feeding Moses with all necessary knowledge, impressing him, too, with the vastness of Egypt's power, and firing his soul with hatred of its cruelty, was Moses' second school of preparation.

The third was *the desert*. "He that believeth shall not make haste." So he that worketh for God shall not make haste. But Moses had not learned

this ; had not learned how long God can wait, and yet be master of the field at last. And so Moses strikes, — strikes before the iron is hot, strikes the blow before the clock in heaven has struck the hour. One day, seeing an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, he raised his hand and struck down the Egyptian, thinking, as the New Testament says, that his brethren would understand how God by his hand would deliver them. Ah, how much more confidence had Moses now, than forty years later in the wilderness ! Then, when God would present him with his commission, he endeavored to beg off, — had a dozen excuses for not accepting it. "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt ?" "My brethren will not believe me." "I am not eloquent, O Lord, but am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. Send, I pray thee, by any one else, but do not send by me."

So forty years later, the young man, who was so eager to strike his blow for the deliverance of Israel, pleads unfitness, incompetence. These forty years had taught him something. His first failure had taught him something. So had his desert life, in which he had been alone with God. Moses at eighty years of age, in his own estimation, was not nearly so much of a man as at forty. So of all growing men always. There are many now in the world, not yet out of their teens, who are a deal wiser and mightier, and fitter to cope with error and wrong, than they will be twenty years hence ; that is, provided they

keep on growing these twenty years. For self-sufficiency, for a man who knows all about it, and is ready to do it all at once, take a young man.

But God has a school ready for such (that is, if they are worth the schooling), and one which they will not be long in entering. It is the school of mistakes, — of failure ; the school in which many a man spells out this lesson, " What a big fool I was ! " This was the training which God now gives to Moses. He allows him, in the impulse of youth, to strike a blow, and then gives him forty years in the desert to meditate upon its folly. And in these years we may well imagine Moses saying to himself, " Knock over Pharaoh's throne ; save a nation ; would you ? You are a sight better fitted to take care of sheep."

And so Moses' training was carried on and completed. The home gave him inspiration ; the palace gave him knowledge ; the desert crowned it all with meditation's great lesson, — a proper self-estimate, a true humility. And then, when the man is furnished, God calls. When the training is complete, the Divine commission is issued.

In conclusion, note some of the great lessons which our subject teaches. And first. We learn *how low, oftentimes, God permits the true cause to sink.* The world has often seen the last stronghold of human rights defended by the might of one solitary arm. So it was here. Israel's hope, and with it the hope of the Church and the world, rested upon one single human life, — this life, that of a born slave ; this slave life, in its infancy, condemned and actually

given into the arms of Death. Yes, Israel's hope floated in the little ark of bulrushes among the flags upon the river's brink. And yet Israel's cause was safe enough, — safe enough surely. Wasn't the ark water-tight? Wasn't it a thing of destiny? Didn't it hold the promise of a covenant-keeping God? Why, all the waters of the Atlantic could not have sunk that little craft.

My brethren, with faith in God, we need never fear. Suppose there is left but one human life for defence. God and such a one are always a majority. And when such a Hope rocks to and fro upon the bosom of the world's mighty waves, it cannot sink; for it carries God with it.

Second. We learn *the measureless importance of one single human life.* God often throws into the balance of the moral world a single life, to keep it even. Think of this, ye travailing mothers, and bite back your pain with something nobler than self-scorn. Ay, bite it back with the faith that you may be mother of the coming saviour. Think of this, ye teachers, and count no life committed to your care common or unclean.

The third lesson is this. *The grand work of man-building.* This is what God, the Great Architect, is for ever engaged in. It is that to which some, — yes, all of us, are called to do. Time itself, with all its centuries, is only one of many hands engaged in this sublime work. Every thing else in this world, all sorrow, all joy, all wars, all peace, all slavery, all liberty, all learning, all art, is only so much scaffolding.

The slavery of the Hebrews ; the cruel despotism of Pharaoh ; the mother's love and the mother's fear ; the princess, the Nile ; ay, even the bulrushes which grew by its brink, — all these were used of God in building up His servant, the man Moses.

Then after a time the scaffolding drops away ; but the building still rises. Unseen by us, angel hands and God Himself, carry on the work, lift up the majestic walls. Now they shine and sparkle in the light of perfect being. Now the glory of the Divine Architect is thrown back in myriad hues, which blind the vision of the imagination. End there is none. Copestone there is none. Up, up, upward unto God, rises the immortal man. His are the glory and power of an endless life.

Finally. We learn *how easy it is for God to fashion a human life* to suit His purpose. "To the Nile with it," shouts Pharaoh from his throne. "To the Nile," responds the power of Egypt. "Yes," says God, "to the Nile ; but *from* it too ; from it, unto a home, unto the palace, unto the headship of a mighty nation, unto Sinai, unto Pisgah." In the very palace of the Pharaohs, God nurses a life for the overthrow of the Pharaohs.

With such delightful facility does God model and mould human life. So perpetually and surely does He fulfil the promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." So, with such grand ease, does He rule the world.

XIII.

ESAU'S PROFANITY.

"LEST THERE BE ANY PROFANE PERSON, AS ESAU, WHO FOR ONE MORSEL OF MEAT SOLD HIS BIRTHRIGHT." — Heb. xii. 16.

PROFANITY is not necessarily swearing. There is a profanity which makes no use of words.

Sidney Smith, I think it is, who speaks of wooden oaths ; of those who do their swearing in the form of slamming the doors after them or before them ; that is, they whirl the door to with a violence which relieves the passion of the soul. So this act becomes the expression, the safety-valve, the report, of their anger. Then there are others whose profanity settles in a silent and dark cloud upon their countenance. No word is spoken ; but the anger which, in the case of another, has its report in a profane word, rises up in the face, spreads itself out upon the countenance, is still, but very lowering. This is the way in which many women swear. They look it instead of speaking it. A special objection to this species of swearing is, that it is apt to last longer than the spoken kind. An angry man can throw off his passion in words much quicker than a woman can wear hers out.

Then, again, there is a profanity much more gen-

eral than either of the species which I have mentioned. It is that of Esau. He used no words of profanity. He was in no rage or passion. His action was, and his guilt was, that he treated contemptuously that which should have been held both important and sacred. He despised his birthright. He sold it for a morsel of meat, — for a mess of pottage.

You are familiar, or ought to be, with the history of Esau. He was the son of Isaac and Rebecca, the grandson of Abraham ; a wild, rough-skinned, hairy hunter. While Jacob sat in the house with his mother, Esau was abroad in the fields engaged in the chase. And if you have ever hunted you know something of how tired one can become in this work, which we call amusement. And through this comes the critical hour in Esau's life. He had been out hunting, and he comes home very tired, overspent with travelling, faint with hunger. And no sooner does he come within the house than the grateful odor of Jacob's pottage enters his nostrils. Oh, how delicious at such a time is the fragrance of prepared food! What will a boy or a man not give for a meal under such circumstances ?

And so Esau says to Jacob, " Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage, for I am faint." As though he had said, " Do give me some of your soup, for I am almost dead with hunger." And the wily Jacob responds, " Sell me this day thy birthright." He has his brother at a disadvantage, and he will make him suffer. Esau paused a moment, went through with what, no doubt, seemed to him a process

of reasoning. It was reasoning; but it was the reasoning of an empty stomach, the argument of a temporary faintness. And Esau said, "Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" That is, "I might better part with my birthright and live, than keep it and die. It is a bargain. Give me the pottage."

But Jacob will make the transaction sure; and he said, "Swear to me this day; and Esau sware unto him." Now all is arranged. The hungry hunter has promised his birthright; he has also sworn to it. And now he sits down to his dearly bought meal. "Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright." And this was his profanity.

It was the contemptuous treatment of that which should have been held sacred and invaluable. It was the selling of station, honor, influence, power, pre-eminence, for a dish of soup and a little bread. It was the parting with chieftainship at the bidding of an empty stomach. It was the allowing of the animal to swallow up the man. It was sinking the interest of a great future in the little pressing need of the present. It was a despising of his birthright. And so, forty centuries after, the Apostle, looking back upon the transaction, utters these words of application and warning: "Watch carefully, look diligently, lest, on a higher level and in more important matters, any one of you be guilty of the folly and profanity of Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright."

As in the case of the words of the Saviour with reference to Lot's wife, so here in the admonition of the Apostle, the truth which gives pertinence and force to the words is the analogy between the physical and the moral natures of man, — between the cravings of the body and the equally urgent cravings of the human heart. This analogy may be brought out in this way. Esau was caught in a pinch of bodily hunger, and gave a most foolish price for a present meal. So you may be caught by the world, and pay a most foolish and extravagant price for the gratification of present desire.

I divide the subject into two parts. First: *the elements of your danger here.* Secondly: *the thoughts or considerations which should save you.*

The first element of danger which I mention is *present stress*, — urgency of present need. Esau was very hungry, — hungry as hunters only know how to be. He had been after his own and his father's favorite venison, and deer-hunting is no easy work. It calls for long tramps through swamp and underbrush, up hills and over streams. It also calls for the most alert vigilance. The eyes must be as wide awake as the feet, and the ears as diligent as either. And thus absorbed, the hunter walks farther than he knows of, performs labor greater than he thinks; and so, when the hunt is over, discovers that he is exhausted beyond any thing that he had anticipated. And then just so soon as exertion ceases, the depletion of the body makes itself felt. So soon as the hunter reaches his home, the hunger which, in the absorption of the

chase, was unnoticed, wakens within him and cries mightily its horseleech cry, "Give, give."

The body, so long on the stretch, so long and so vigorously plied with its task, demands immediate attention, the immediate restoration of its wasted energies. And in this condition it was that Esau came into the presence of his brother's pottage, plunged into the steaming fragrance of Jacob's broth. His danger was his present stress, — his biting hunger within him. The hold which Jacob had upon him was through this raging appetite.

And so it happens often upon a higher level, and with issues infinitely more important. The moral danger of men is often from their present stress, — from their present and pressing need. The man who has just risen from a hearty meal and gone out into the street, is under no temptation to steal from the baker's wagon which stands by the sidewalk. His physical condition is such that the shining loaves are no temptation to him. There is no leverage of his nature which they can work, no hold which they can get upon him. But the case is vastly different when the street-boy, who slept last night in an ash-barrel, and whose lips for twenty-four hours have not tasted food, comes along by the bread-cart. Involuntarily his tired feet halt. His eyes, how wide they open upon those blessed loaves! His mouth, how it waters! Now he looks to the right and the left; up the street, down the street; no one in sight, — and his hands spring like a steel-trap upon the nearest loaf. Why? Because he is hungry. Because that baker's cart was paradise

before his greedy eyes, and the loaf which he snatched out of it very heaven to his great want. His weakness, his danger, was his great need.

So oftentimes do children of a larger growth come unto their critical hour. By misfortune, by loss, by squandering, or by the increasing power of an evil appetite (growing by that it feeds upon), the man's desire for money has been made fierce, clamorous, raving. And now he is brought into the presence of his coveted boon. Money is before him, within his reach. It is not his own, but it is within sight. Not his own, but it may be had. Oh, how he wants it! And so the man stands in the presence of his temptation, weak through the power of the craving within him. The next step is soon taken. The exposed man risks the penalty of the law; ventures honor, character, reputation; sells all these at the bidding of his hungry nature. The figures upon the book are tampered with. The funds are abstracted from the safe; the illicit speculation is entered into; the bribe is taken; the counsel-fee accepted. The hungry Esau gets his mess of pottage, despising the birthright of his manhood; trading, selling that which he should hold above all price.

And there is yet another and more vivid view of the working of this same mighty power. Man is born to a nobler birthright than honor or reputation even. In every sinful human being there vests the possible title to a blessed immortality. Heir of God, heir of heaven, he is by virtue of his high pre-eminence. By holding on to virtue, by denying self in its lower states, by

conquering temptation, by standing up against present desire, it is his high privilege and dignity to rise unto glory, honor, and immortality. But the hour of present and pressing indigence bursts upon the man. He comes back from his long chase after satisfying good. His hunger opens up within him a voracious maw. He feels that he must have the desire of his heart, — must have it *now*. And then the world offers it, — offers it for a price. "Give me your birthright," she says, "swear it me, and you shall have what you want. Throw away principle, and wealth is yours. Renounce integrity, and here is honor. Sell me conscience, and I give you success."

And the man reasons, Esau like, "Behold, I am at the point of death, and of what use is the birthright to a dead man? Heaven is far in the future, — a dim, uncertain good. My title to it is not wealth or honor or success. Better have what I can get now." And then, turning to the world, he says, "It is a bargain. Here is conscience, here is principle, here is my hope of Heaven, here is my Christ. Let me have your pleasure, your wealth, your honor, your prepared meal." And the world gives, — fulfils its agreement. The man makes money. He goes to the senate. His becomes a great name among men. "Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way," — without his birthright. So the world gives its victim. He eats, he drinks, he rises up and goes his way; goes his way to meditate upon the words, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

So human lives despise their birthright. So profanely do they deal with their immortal interests. So do they, in a moment of present stress, sell their souls. Thirty pieces buy their Saviour, because these pieces are offered to a hungry soul.

The second element in the danger here *is the almost omnipotent power of the present.* Esau was very hungry, — in a condition to place a very high estimate upon food of any kind. Still, great as was his temptation to pay an extravagant price for food, he would not have consummated his folly except that the food was already before him, ready for his immediate use. If Jacob had said, "Now, my brother, I see you are very hungry; and I'll tell you what I'll do. If you will give me the birthright, I'll go out and get some vegetables and a kid, and seethe some pottage for you." I say, if Jacob had so addressed Esau, he never would have got the birthright. Esau would not have felt his hunger so keenly if the broth had not been before him. Besides, he would have reasoned, "If I must wait until food is prepared by some one, I'll prepare it myself and keep my birthright." But the case was, that to Esau's pressing need Jacob could bring immediate relief, — could offer food already prepared. And so he got the birthright; bought it at a low figure, because he was able to pay the price at once.

And men always sell at a lower price for cash in hand; and this, whether their merchandise is houses, or lands, or conscience, or character. Take the holders of real estate in our city who wish to sell. They have all of them one price for the buyer who pays all

cash, and another and higher price for the buyer who wishes to pay in the future. This is so because the possession of money has value; because there is always more or less uncertainty about promises for the future, whether to pay or to do any thing else. And I think I can see this same principle reaching out from this narrow sphere and ramifying all through the conduct of men. A child would rather have one toy to-day than the promise of a dozen to-morrow. And men are but older children.

Look at the man who is wrecking his business, his health, and his family with strong drink. He would never pay this fearful price for a distant gratification. If the rumseller should come to him with a promise for next year; if he should say, "If you will give me your money now, if you will throw into my hands your health and the happiness of your family, I promise you that, ten years from now, you shall have the whiskey which you crave." Under these circumstances, do you think the man would buy? Buy, at such a price, a future and distant gratification of his appetite! Why, he would never think of such folly. But now how is it? Why, out of his home, out of the presence of his wife and children, he steps into the very presence of the accursed fluid. Its fumes rise into his nostrils. The appetite is terrible within him; and, what is more, he can have it gratified at once. And so he sells, — sells his birthright, his manhood, his family, his soul for liquor now, — for his mess of pottage down.

So it is, all through the region of sin and soul-

destroying vice. The men who are living in the enjoyment of dishonest wealth to-day — of wealth for which they have given their honor, their peace, and their souls — would not have paid this fearful price for riches which should come in a distant day. The uncertainty of the future, the dimness of the distant prize, their own valuation of moral character, would have prevented the foolish and profane transaction. They would have said, "If I must wait so long for my reward, I will pay no such price. I will not venture honor and character; I will not sell my Saviour and my soul for something which I cannot have for years." But when the money is just before the eyes; when, by a single turn of the hand, it can be put in the pocket, — then the case is very different. The glitter of the present gold blinds the eye, confuses the reason, weakens the will, debauches the soul; and the man says, "Let me have it: I am willing to pay the price."

And I think there are, sitting in the high places of our nation, those who would not have paid the price which they have given for the privilege of their seats twenty years to come. Ah, no! They would have thought more seriously upon the transaction if this condition had come in. Those twenty years would have each been a hand to brush away sophistry from the eyes, to brace the will, to guard the conscience. Those twenty years would have been twenty reasons against the profane selling of their manhood's birthright.

So it is with all sin. It overcomes through the hope, the assurance, of immediate gratification. Heaven is

in the future ; so is death ; so is judgment ; and so is God. These all at uncertain distances, while right before them, ready to their hand, is the price of iniquity, — the wages of sin. Put off these far as is Heaven ; let the day of the realization of what a man hopes for, and expects to get, through sin, — let this day be as distant as is the realization upon virtue and piety, — and there is no man but who would look to the latter, and choose it, too. Let houses, lands, honor, fame, — in a word, worldly success, — be placed side by side with Heaven on a distant hill of the future ; and let a man know that he cannot have the first any sooner than he can have the last : how many, think you, are there who would not say, " If I must wait so long for either, I'll choose Heaven " ? Oh, it is clear as the light ! The profanity of sin is in selling to the Devil, at a miserably petty price, because he promises to pay at once.

Under a tired and hungry Esau's nose is stirred a mess of seething pottage ; and, intoxicated by its fragrance, the victim cries out, " Let me have it ; let me have it *now*." So men debase their manhood ; so they sell their birthright ; so they are wheedled out of their title to Heaven ; so they barter away their immortal souls. They sell so cheap because they sell for cash.

I turn now to the second point of the subject we are considering, — to give you *some thoughts which should save a man here.*

I mention first this, — *to-day is not all.* If Esau had so thought, so reasoned, neither Jacob nor his

mother, nor both combined, could have gotten his birthright. If he had reflected, saying to himself, "I am tired and hungry now, very hungry: but I have long years before me; and through these years leads my birthright, crowning them all with honor and influence and chieftainship,— out of this thought would have come this noble response to the base proposition. "No: much as I desire your pottage, I will not, for an hour's gratification, debase and rob the promise of a long and glorious future." But this Esau did not do. He seems to have forgotten every thing save the little hungry present, and into this he threw all noble ambition, every high hope.

To-day is not all, my hearers. If the man who, in the midst of his ill-gotten wealth, is now lying upon the bed of death, had thought of this bed in the far-off day of his temptation, the thought would have saved him. Out of it would have been born such wisdom as this: "The opportunity is most tempting. But I see a long future reaching out beyond it, and I cannot afford to blacken all this."

Ah! my hearers, there are many in the world to-day, who made their beds as they did, because they did not know how long, did not consider how long, they must lie upon them. They planted the thorn in their pillow, forgetting that the work of their hands was to last, not for a single night, but for all earth's dark and weary nights, and for the darker and morningless night of eternity. With their own hands they kindled the fire within their breast, because they did not remember that the flame they lighted is the one which shall never be quenched.

Hence comes the great emphasis which God in the Bible lays upon faith, — upon the great future, — upon the things which are unseen, but which are eternal. The Great Father would have His children forecast the years ; to act as immortal beings ; to live not only for time, but for eternity. And so I turn unto you to-night, and say, "To-day — the present — is not all."

I can conceive of you giving way to temptation, wrapping yourself up in a life of disobedience and sense ; and all seeming well enough to you now. Esau was, no doubt, quite happy during his meal of bread and pottage. But what about the future ? How shall it be with you when, like him, you must rise up from your momentary gratification, and go your way, — the way of all the earth, — the way that leads out into the eternities ? Say that money, say that pleasure, say that honor, say that self, in any one of its lower forms, is the meal at which you are sitting. Well, it is pleasant, but it will soon be over, and then what ? What ? Disinheritance, pennilessness, soul hunger ; and these all remediless for evermore. So are you willing life's short day shall end ?

Oh my hearers ! receive, take into your hearts this preservative thought, — *to-day is not all. There is a future coming*, — a future with its days and its years and its ages. A future with its glory, honor, and immortality. A future with its endless Heaven, and its Blessed and Blessing Father God. Mortgage not this future. Sell it not for a temporary gratification. Use not its blessed possibility to relieve a temporary

need. Throw it not into the mouth of a single hungry hour. Be not like Esau, who for one morsel of meat impoverished all his coming years, — sold his birthright.

A second preservative thought is this, — *there are things more important than the gratification of present desire.* Esau felt very hungry, and in very childishness he cried out, "I must have something to eat, no matter what it costs. I must have this pottage or I will die." Well, suppose this had been true; he had better have died than played the fool; better have died than live to disgrace his name, and debase his memory. Life purchased at such a price is not worth the having. So I preach unto you. There are things of more importance than bread for your hungry hour. There are duties to yourself, to the future, to your God, which rise immensely above any temporary gratification. It is better for you to wear sackcloth over a heart of peace and purity, than fine linen and purple over one of vileness and remorse. It is more important to you to be pure than to have pleasure, to be good than to have success.

Do you say, "See, how the wicked prosper"? What of it? Principle is better than prosperity. Some sacrifices you cannot afford to make for any results. There are things which you ought not to sell at any price. They are these, — usefulness in the world, peace of conscience, purity of heart, the favor of God; a good life, which shall not blanch or quiver in a single nerve, when Death shall lay his hand upon it. And is there e'en now any hand stirring its mess of

pottage before your face, under your nostrils; offering the meal of an earthly success, as an equivalent for your birthright in the kingdom of God. Believe me, this is a vile and treacherous hand, reached up from the blackness of darkness; and, if you eat, you eat as a fool. Better go hungry all your days. Better let the world do its worst, ay, better let it starve you, than that you should eat at its hands the price of your own soul.

A third preservative thought is this, — *the sale of the birthright is irrevocable.* It had been a small matter for Esau to have said, "Yes, you may have my birthright," if on the morrow he could have gotten or bought it back. Then it would have been pottage to-day and birthright to-morrow, and this would have been very well. But listen to Esau's after history, as it is given by the Apostle: "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." The day came, when he who had sold his birthright for a morsel of meat would fain have had it back again. Though he had parted with the birthright, he was not willing to give up the blessing. But these two go together always.

And the world is full of those who mourn, as Esau mourned, for the blessing which went in the day that they sold the birthright. There are thousands of the world's successful ones longing for peace and for happiness, who would give all they have in the world for the approval of conscience and the blessing of

God. But it is too late. These things which they desire are the fruits of character; and, having bartered this, these sorrowful ones cannot have its fruits. Neither can tears buy these fruits. No one ever has sold, no one ever can sell, duty for a price, and keep happiness.

Beware, then, how you part with the former for any mess of pottage which this world can offer; for such bartering is irrevocable. And even God Almighty, the Infinite Father, is withheld, as Isaac was, from laying hands of blessing upon the one who has been guilty of such profane and infamous traffic.

XIV.

THE GREAT CONDITION.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." — Rev. ii. 7.

THE first truth implied in the words of the text is this, — *that success in this world is not a matter of course.* That life in this world is surrounded by dangers, beset by enemies, liable to failure, to loss, to ruin.

This truth has its illustration in all spheres of life; even down to the lowest. The inhabitants of a drop of water, the little creatures which float in the sunbeam, these contend among themselves for the prize. Some of them overcome: some are overcome. The conflict of the ages is miniatured in the life of the ephemera. These have their period of conflict, where victory hangs in the balance. The few hours of their existence are full of little dangers, little enemies, possible ills; and so with these the battle of life goes on.

Now come up a little higher, and into a clearer region. Every species of vegetable life is shut off from its highest and fullest end by the line of the enemy. Every grain of wheat is menaced; so is every stalk of corn, every springing grass-blade, every

flowering shrub, and every fruiting tree. And not otherwise is it in the animal kingdom, — in the region of organized physical life. Enemies of this life swarm in the recesses of the great deep; opposing, assaulting, overcoming myriads of creatures, before their life's prophecy is fulfilled, — before their life's end is reached. And, in the depths of the forest, march and countermarch the foes of life development, of life conquest. Of birds and beasts only a few reach the end. The rest perish by the way; are beaten back; are swallowed down; are overcome.

Think, too, of the numberless germs of human life which perish: many, before they see the light, murdered by the reproductive power, — by the parental hand. Then the countless diseases of human flesh and earth's casualties gather to meet the remainder upon the very threshold of the world; contesting with them every step of progress, every foothold of power, every breath of life. And of these little ones thus opposed, thus assaulted, how many succumb! how many are overcome! How full is our earth's crust with the dust of infant forms! And even if they continue, why continuance is often not health, not strength, not beauty, not the victory of physical life. Look into your almshouses and hospitals and asylums; full, all of them, of mutilation and decay; full, all of them, of battered and wasted wrecks; full, all of them, of slow death. And then the streets. Are they not filled with men and women who carry pain as a daily burden? How small is the minority who are strong for work, elastic to endure; perfect physical machines,

to whom food is sweet, and existence even a very joy.

But I widen the view. Within the body hides the true man, who, with the hand of his free choice, reaches out for the supreme object of life; and, by the voice of his will, summons all his powers to the contest. But is success sure to such a one? Is it always reached? Life's coveted good, is this always won? Suppose one of you should say to-day, "I'll make money; conscience or not, I'll make money. Heaven or not, I'll make money." Suppose that you should to-day consecrate your life to this end. Would this insure your reaching it? Why, the world is full of men who have failed here. Full of men who have murdered their manhood for gain, and then failed of the gain. Full of men who have sold their Saviour for the thirty pieces of silver, and then been cheated out of these.

I say not that it takes the highest kind of talent to make money. It does not. Many very stupid men stumble upon it. Many very little men succeed here, upon the principle that a penny saved is a penny made; the oyster-shell of their meanness closing down upon, and hopelessly shutting in, every wandering cent. Some men hold dollars as tight as the shell-fish does pearls. Both must be killed before any thing can be gotten out of them. But what I wish to say here is, that a man must overcome ever in order to success. And yet, where there is one who overcomes, there are hundreds who are overcome. It is so in every sphere of life. All around us, in every direc-

tion, we see men holding up the white flag. They have been thrown from the plane where they chose to wrestle. Whipped in the battle of life, as they chose to fight it.

But now come up higher. Introduce moral quality, and how still farther does this reduce the class who have overcome! Ever in the highest regions the classes are smaller. There are more toad-stools than Yosemite pines. There are more ants than elephants. There are more in the schools who know how to read than there are who are able to call the stars by their names, or to paint a Madonna. So there are more who have made money than there are who have grown manhood; more who have gotten office than there are who have gotten character.

How few of the world's successful ones are at peace; are happy; are ready for death; are prepared for the immortal life! With all their success, they have not overcome in the true and high sense of this word. Physical passions dominate over them; anxiety frets, impurity gangrenes, dishonesty debases, death terrifies, and God is no comfort. They have not overcome, if man is immortal. They have not overcome, if this life means probation. Overcome they are, if there is a heaven and a God above it.

My hearers, there is no truth written more clearly upon society's face to-day than its enmity to the high and true human life. Men growing more selfish, more anxious, more impure, more absorbed in things that perish, more as if there were no heaven and no God in a near future; women growing more frivolous, more

vain, more useless. Humanity's children, made in God's image, possible heirs of eternal life, narrowing, darkening, poisoning their life, growing away from simplicity and purity and benevolence. This is a sight which is ever before our eyes ; and it means this : that the word "overcome" still conditions the true and the high life.

A second truth implied in the text is this : *the danger to each human life is special.* "To him that overcometh," says the Saviour in the most general terms ; that is, overcometh what stands in his way, what must be overcome by him.

And this, I say, is special in the case of every individual. That which is a temptation and a snare to me is none to you. The rock upon which you may split may be altogether out of your neighbor's path. He may not be steering in that direction. As with the body, so with the soul. What is poison to one is harmless to another. Thus, for instance, one woman will be able to endure a great deal of what is called "society," even if this in itself is not altogether edifying. She will move through the fire unharmed, — not even the smell of it fastening upon her. Through selfishness and frivolity and vanity she will pass, unselfish and serious and humble. Not so with her neighbor and friend. Her head will be turned, and her whole life poisoned ; society treating her just as alcohol works upon many another life, — dizzying, befooling, extinguishing the spiritual.

Then again. Some men can be trusted with money. It is not a bait for them ; not what they care to sell

their souls for. While others never can feel the money of others passing through their hands without an involuntary itching to close upon it. Then there is alcohol; nausea to many a stomach. No more desired, no more palatable, than Croton oil. There is no possible danger to such from this quarter. Whatever they do with it, they will not drown their immortality in strong drink. Then right by their side are others who, with diseased brain and trembling nerves and blood on fire, would jump into Hell itself for a draught of the accursed poison.

Without continuing these illustrations, let me say that *natural constitution rules here.* I do not mean in such a sense as to rid any man of responsibility. No matter where his blood came from, when at last it runs in his own veins a man must feel that it is his own. It may carry in it the dregs of another's life. If so, its last owner is bound, by the law of his personal obligation, to purify it. Demons of hellish desire may sail upon it; but, if so, the free agent must inaugurate a war of extermination. Sluggish, it must be quickened. At a red heat, and raging with suicidal desire, it must be kept in check, calmed and cooled by the power of a pure life.

No one denies that many are born into this world carrying a fearful burden of disability. In so far as they could, their parents fought and lost life's battle for them. In so far as they could, I say; for, in the strict sense of the words, to no parent is it given to fight and lose the battle of life for his child. What he may do is this: make victory easier. What he may do is this: make defeat awfully easy.

What is denied here is, that a man is not responsible for his inherited tendencies, for his congenital propensities. A man's body, wherever it came from, is at last his own, and he is responsible for it. "My father was a drunkard before me, and I must be one." This is fatality, contradicted by our sense of freedom. It is materialism, contradicted by our own knowledge of ourselves, as more than mere matter. It is reasoning which no man's conscience accepts, and with which no man can go to the bar of God.

So with a man's mind. It is his own at last. Wherever it came from, it is his own. His own to correct, to guide, to inform. And if a man finds himself with a sceptical tendency, it is his duty to overcome here, as truly as in the region of physical appetite. He must hold his mind upon eternal truth, until she shall burn her impress into it. Such is the importance of natural constitution here. It makes up a man's responsibility. It differentiates his danger. It points out that which he must overcome, if ever he would attain Life.

Then again. *Providential circumstances rule here.* Joseph was thrown into Egypt, and into the presence of great temptation, by no choice of his own. What now? Is Joseph thus relieved from responsibility? By no means. His providential circumstances govern as to the danger which he must overcome. The responsibility is still his own. If he does not meet it, if he succumb to the menacing evil, he goes down to moral death, — a suicide.

So with us all. Many of the surroundings of your

life, — some of them full of temptation, — are not of your own choosing. Your great spiritual danger may lie hidden in a circumstance which you had no voice in choosing. This may be wealth, or it may be poverty; high social status, or low; your familiar associations, or an unavoidable crisis in your business affairs. But this does not free you from responsibility. It only serves to define to you your special danger. Your obligation, — an obligation which conditions your salvation, — is still found in the word "overcome." You must overcome the temptation which is brought to bear upon your integrity, or you fall guiltily, and shall never "eat of the Tree of Life."

Natural constitution, providential circumstances, — these only determine what it is *specially*, that a man must overcome; what it is that stands between him and salvation. And through this he must fight his way to the Tree of Life. Natural constitution he may allow to overcome him. So he may providential circumstances. But in either case his own will shall assent to evil, and the result shall be — and God will so label it for eternity — "self-destruction."

My hearers, I know not what may be your especial soul danger. But this I proclaim: there is no dispensation in God's universe; none from the hand of fatality; none from the hand of circumstances; ay, none from the hand of your Maker Himself, which can free you from the obligation to overcome. It lies not in the power of any agent to alter the condition of your salvation. Overcoming here is salvation; and

God Almighty may not bring salvation to you or to me in any other way.

A third truth implied in the text is this: *It is possible for a man, for any man, to overcome.* Whatever the danger, whether it comes from within or from without; however great or perilous it may be, — yet is it possible for man successfully to oppose the evil which threatens his true and high life. He may preserve his purity. He may hold fast to his integrity. His will may refuse to coalesce with evil. His crown is his own, and he may defy any hand of earth or hell to rob him of it.

This truth is the plainest, the most conclusive, that the text contains. It rests first of all *upon the sincerity of the Saviour of men.* This is most clear from His words. "To him that overcometh," says He. And, when He so declares, He surely does not mean to mock men by grounding their salvation upon an impossible condition. So, again He says, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Is there then a man to whom these words shall come, who may be dis-crowned against his will? In any case, is natural constitution omnipotent? Are circumstances unconquerable? If so, all that the Saviour of men has for such a one is mockery, *mockery.*

Again: This truth, that a man may overcome, *rests upon the infinite love of God.* It is not possible for the human mind to conceive of infinite love allowing man to be placed in a condition that he may not overcome; may not rise to the highest and noblest

possibility of his being. I know there are dark things in Providence. But over against all these I place this truth, — *God, means the Infinite Good One.* I know there are mysterious words written upon these pages. But over against them, wherever found, I place these other words also written in this volume, "God is love." These words are not mystery, and their brightness swallows up every spot of darkness which rests upon the page of Revelation; clothes with the *promise of light* every dark page of the Book of Providence. Infinite Love! — this means for every creature a chance. Infinite Love! — this means for every man the noblest possibility. Infinite Love! — this means infinite helpfulness for every human need. Infinite Love! — this means that a man may overcome.

Again: This truth *rests upon the great provision of salvation* which God has made for man. This salvation, inaugurated by the Great Father's love, chanted by angel choirs, perfected by the sacrifice of His only Son, and the earth inhabitation of the Spirit, — this great salvation surely must reach unto the end of making the salvation of every man to whom it comes possible. Else surely in the future its glory shall be tarnished and spoiled; tarnished and spoiled by the wails and the curses of those who have sunk into a hopeless and necessary doom. Can you imagine Infinite Love allowing itself to be glorified by a select Heaven, and that too, while ever and anon there came breaking into its hallelujahs the sharp and bitter cry of a soul that would have been saved, but

could not? Is this Heaven? Is this God? Is this redemption's praise? Ah! I think I see Infinite Love in such a case descending from the throne, and commanding every chorus of praise into silence, while it reaches down for the unwilling denizen of darkness, for the crushed victim of inexorable fate.

My hearers, upon these three great truths, — *the sincerity of the Saviour of men, the infinite love of God, and the promise of the great salvation,* — upon these foundation stones of truth I stand, and declare unto you that you may overcome; you may keep your crown until it shines in the lustre of a redeemed immortality. You may stand up in your integrity, until you shall crystallize into an everlasting pillar for the temple of your God. From off the surface of this earth, strewn with the wrecks of men as it is, you may step a victor, with your last words exclaiming, "I have overcome the world."

I now turn to the inferential and applicatory fulness of the text. First of all *it holds up religion before us in its true greatness and worthiness.*

Consider, here, two lower views of religion, and the contrast which they furnish. First: *The churchly view.* This is productive of churchmen; persons who know the spiritual calendar, trained in the service as for an exhibition, strong everywhere to blow the trumpet of the Church. The full development of this view of religion makes the Church every thing, and the individual nothing; transforms religion into a round of church duties; gives salvation to the individual through the mystic power of a holy corporation.

Then, secondly, there is on the other extreme *the experimental view.* Here, the experience of a past day is carried about as religion ; kept as a passport for the gate of Heaven. I point to these views only to show how *little* religion can be made. No wonder that it is often left to little men whose great delight is a graceful gown, and to soured women who have come to believe that they are of the number of the elect.

Now contrast with these the view of religion as presented by the text. It calls not *unto the Church,* but through the Church *unto character.* It bids no individual unto the preservation of some past experience of his immature life ; but summons him to the daily conquest of every form of evil which opposes his true and high development. And, my hearers, you shall never know the fulness there is in religion until you come to take hold upon God, day by day, for strength to overcome. You shall never come truly to understand the salvation of Christ until, out of felt weakness and danger, you shall look unto Him for grace to save you from soul-drifting ; from soul-degradation and loss ; for grace to enable you to live the pure and true life in this world of impurity and falsehood.

OVERCOME. This is the voice with which Christ speaks to men. OVERCOME. This is the essence of religion, in which the human power takes hold of the Divine, working onward to the end of a personal regeneration. This is the true view of religion ; the religion which thoughtful men need, which endan-

gered lives need ; which this world, so full of shams, needs. With this purpose guiding their being ; with this daily use of Christ, — even if they know not how to count beads or to bow in the creed, or to tell when they were converted, — shall men have the victory which overcometh the world, and the report of which, borne heavenward, shall open wide the golden gates for the reception of the conqueror.

Again : This subject calls to *a careful ordering of the external circumstances of our lives*, so far as these are in our power. So far as these are in our power, I say. Some men cannot help being rich ; and this, although other things being equal, their salvation is rendered more difficult thereby. So also, some men can hardly help filling high and important office ; and this, although public station is a hill swept by temptation, which the humble plane of private life knows nothing of. But surely, we who desire to overcome should study to make our victory as easy and as sure as possible. If your fortune depended upon your lifting a certain weight, you would not first place your feet upon bog or quicksand.

Yet, in the moral world, how many needlessly expose themselves to disadvantage ! They act as though they thought they could run the race carrying heavy weight ; could fight the battle of life with hands and feet tied. Intemperate men look upon the wine when it is red. Men, easily tempted to impurity, live in scenes which inflame the passions. Men, with whom it is a daily struggle to be honest, long for places where they shall hold large trusts, and handle much

of other people's money. Weak and vain men, whose first condition of safety is home life, want to be sent to Congress. My hearers, the victory here, the overcoming here, will be hard enough for you and for me at the best. Let us not then needlessly expose ourselves to temptations, needlessly rush into or dwell in circumstances which are most unfavorable to purity, to truthfulness, and to righteousness.

Once more. This subject *holds up the Church and all the means of grace in their true light.* They are so many helps to man in his great struggle. Let us not think of the Church as an end in itself; as a beautiful and dignified institution to which we ought to contribute our quota of respectable living. But rather let us think of the Church as our servant; as something out of which we can get help. So of the prayer hour in the midst of the busy week. So of any Christian service, and of every Christian duty.

My hearers, thus have I brought before you the condition of future well-being and happiness, to which our Saviour Himself, conformed in His life upon earth, and which He gives out to us. And now, I beseech you, give not up the struggle. I know it is hard. With passions raging within, the world tempting, and Hell breathing upon you, — it is an awful struggle. But take courage. God is your friend. Heaven bends in sympathy over you. Christ has died for your salvation. Oh, take hold of God! Take hold of an Almighty Saviour. Preserve your purity. Hold fast to your integrity. Let not man nor devil take your crown. Bind it fast to your head, until the

day when you may lay it at your Saviour's feet. Hear His promise, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

Only *here* is opposition to be encountered. Only here, *in this world*, shall you have trouble in right living. A few, short, sharp days of conflict with your lower self, and then the end, — then Life, true, abounding, ETERNAL LIFE.

XV.

LIFE WISDOM.

"So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." — Psalms, xc. 12.

So *teach* us. And yet it would seem as though we needed not to be taught on such a subject. The demonstration of human mortality is a hundred generations of the dead. It is the ground beneath our feet, billowy with graves full of dust which was once human forms. It is that long line of well-nigh one hundred thousand human lives, which every day melts into nothingness before our eyes. It is in every tick of the clock which marks the passage of some immortal soul.

It is in our fading vision, in our failing strength, in our whitening locks ; in the forming wrinkles upon our faces ; in the furrows of care upon our hearts ; in the limitation of every earth-born aspiration ; in the deduction of every sober thought ; aye, it is everywhere written out in letters of light before our eyes, — the demonstration of the mortality of man.

"Beneath our feet, and o'er our head,
Is equal warning given.
Beneath us lie the countless dead,
And over us is the Heaven."

Teach us here! As well tell us that our eyes behold the sun in the heavens, as teach us that we are mortal. As well teach us that we live, as that we must die. Let the teaching be reserved for more mysterious truth, for less patent facts. Man will number his days without an inspiration from above. Will he? Does he?

Consider the generations of the past; how they bought and sold, how they married and were given in marriage, until death came and took them all away. Consider the generations of our own day; how eagerly and out of breath they are chasing the shadows of earth; heeding not those who fall by their very side; closing up the gaps of death without a thought of their own mortality. The woman dresses and dines and dances; and so whirls forward a bright and beautiful thing all forgetful of the end, which is the dark and hollow grave. The man busies himself in pleading causes, writing opinions, building railroads, managing banks, buying and selling, — a thing of time, a thing of sense, all unconscious of his mortality. Acting, living, planning, purposing, as though there was no number to his days.

But then, what? Is happiness disallowed? Is joy a sin? Are the necessary occupations of life to be ignored? Not at all. I only refer to these things to show you that the human mind works not naturally unto the end of numbering the days. So the first condition of right living, the fundamental thought of a wise life, is ignored, is undreamed of, by thousands and thousands.

See, my hearers, how dependent we are upon divine teaching, upon the inspiration which is from the Almighty. Left to ourselves, we forget the plainest, the most important fact of our existence. Left to ourselves, we rush or drift along without once stopping to make that numbering which is the very beginning of life-wisdom; to which it would seem as though the instincts of our nature would most surely compel.

But what is the wisdom which comes from the numbering of our days? Rather let me put it in this way: What are the varieties of human life which this wisdom condemns? Let it speak out, and this time not to approve but to judge and condemn.

Divine types of human life arise before our eyes. Human lives are no more alike than are the trees in the forest or the flowers in your garden.

First, there is the *anxious* life. A matter of temperament, you say. Yes, to a certain extent. Blood, inherited disposition, may not be overlooked here. Cheerfulness, no doubt, is transmitted from father to son; and so is despondency, a propensity to look on the dark side of things. Then it is said that this over-anxious condition of the mind is a result of impaired health. And here also is a truth. It is only a very superior person who can rise above and triumph over his physical condition; who can be equable and wise and tender, when the body is sick. Dyspepsia conquers any thing less than gigantic will-power. But admitting all this, still education, reason, truth, must not be left out here. There is such a thing as a man

taking himself in hand for correction. He may call reason to his aid. He may smite his propensity with the hand of truth. So here, the hand of truth is raised for smiting, for condemnation. First, this truth, — your own helplessness; secondly, — God's infinite goodness.

And now comes the wisdom of the text, sharpest, strongest of all to rebuke and condemn here. Thus it speaks: It will soon be over. The dream will soon be past. The battle will soon be fought. Do not worry then. The burden so heavy, you shall carry it but for a day. The trial so sharp, you shall soon have an escape from it. These things will soon have an end, and that for ever. Oh, how quiet, how peaceful is the region to which human life hasteth! "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there; and the servant is free from his master."

As the rivers run to the sea, so toward and unto this great, deep gulf of mortality runs the noisy, fevered life of man. Look into the business world. Where are the old familiar faces of the exchange, of the bank, of the street? — faces so full of anxiety; faces so etched and wrinkled. All gone; all passed to a region where money no longer allures or fascinates. Look into the political world. What a fever has our city been thrown into during the past week! But look upon the crowd which hurries along our streets, which blocks up the corridors of our hotels, which

surges up to yonder Capitol. Where are the old faces with which Washington used to be so familiar, — the old politicians who were wont to fill the public eye at such a time? Gone, gone, like a dream. Old men; they sit in their quiet homes, or in their last sleep they rest beneath the sod.

Oh, ye anxious ones, hear the voice of the text! The cares which vex, the ambitions which absorb, the eagerness which excites, the fever which consumes, these all are dead men's clothes which you wear; and you too shall soon put them off. Like the shadow upon the side of the mountain; like the shuttle which darts through the loom; like the handful of mist, which for a moment hangs tremulous in the morning sun, and then is gone for ever, — such is your life. Oh, let the wisdom which comes from the numbering of your days rebuke your anxious life, and cool the fever of the present hour!

A second type of human life, condemned by the wisdom which comes from the numbering our days, is the *selfish* life. Selfish life is that which is severed from all sympathetic connection with fellows. It covers the whole range from mere indifference to hate; from hands which are folded in the presence of human want, to hands which are raised to beat down the weak and the struggling.

Consider that only for the brief period of this life is it given unto any one of us to work our life power into the welfare of our fellow-men. Here only can we invite to the Cross, and to salvation. Here only can we say to the brother by our side, Come to Jesus.

Here also, and here alone, can we contribute of our efforts and our money to the amelioration of human want, to the alleviation of the sufferings of our fellow-men. If we lift up our eyes and look beyond the present life, this is the sight which meets our view: A glorious Heaven, in which no one needs help of another; where every life is self-sufficient and overflowing. A dismal Hell, in which no one has power to help another; where all is utter weakness, hopeless bankruptcy, irreparable loss.

But HERE, ah! this is the golden span of our being, by which we are bound as possible saviours to the members of our race. Here, we can give of our life unto them; aye, can work this life of ours into their history, incorporate to all eternity. Here, we can throw a ray of light on the pathway of the wanderer; teach the ignorant; reclaim the vicious; lift up immortal lives from the horrible pit and the miry clay, until their feet shall stand upon the solid rock; aye! fashion with our own hands pillars for the temple of our God.

And the selfish life is the one which ignores this golden opportunity; which folds in ease the hands which might help, or, worse still, uses them to beat down the weak and the struggling. And all this, while the time is passing. All this, while on high the days of this glorious power are being numbered. I imagine two men standing side by side upon this earth to-day. Of these, one is ignorant, the other wise; one is weak, the other strong; one is poor, the other rich. Fountain and receptacle are these two

lives to-day. From the one unto the other sympathy may flow, help may flow, salvation may flow. The man may save his brother, for God has so arranged. But only for to-day. To-morrow I see these two men meet in eternity; but now upon a level; now independent of each other for weal or for woe eternally.

Oh, with what ineffable regret must the selfish life look back upon its lost opportunity! With what unending sorrow must it look into the faces of those whose earthly life it might have helped, but which it despised and despoiled! There I see the murderer meet his victim. What a meeting! There I see Dives looking far off, until his eyes rest upon Lazarus; and then he remembers the palace and the gate, the sumptuous table and the refuse, the rich clothing and the rags. Oh, what a reminiscence! There I see the rumseller stand, as the lives of his earthly victims come up to meet him. There, too, the miser, — his hands now empty, — stands, as his possible beneficiaries come up one after another. There, too, I see the debauchee, as the fallen spirits of those whom he here seduced come flying and cursing towards him.

And I see another sight. The teacher stands to welcome the ignorant whom she taught, the ragged whom she clothed, the weak and endangered around whom she placed and locked the strong arms of the Great Saviour. And there the philanthropist stands to greet those whom he loved, and for whom he lived. So, those who live for others' good rest from their

labors. So, their works do follow them. Star after star of rejoicing is set in their unfading crowns, until these crowns shine with a glory only inferior to that upon the head of the Great Saviour. And the possibility of all this measureless regret, of this unmeasurable joy, is shut up within the span of this life which so soon is gone! Brethren, read the condemnation of the text. It rests, and will for ever rest, upon the head of the selfish life.

But again, the condemnation rests upon what is known as the *worldly* life. All our lives are worldly in a sense, and to a certain extent. First: We live in this world. This is our home. We are this world's people. Not out of relation are we to the universe, I know. Neither is the individual out of relation to the city in which he lives, to the State of which he is a citizen. Still he has his home. So we. This planet, Earth, is our home. Here we were born; here we live. Our activities, our cares, our business, all these are here. The real-estate owner owns here, not in Saturn, not in Sirius, not in the Sun. His freehold has no hold save in this world. So of all business. It is done here. It is a band which binds us to earth. It is worldly in its nature. And from this no voice of reason or of God calls away.

A false Church may immure living men and women. But so far as she does this, she is guilty of burying alive, — a horrible wickedness. The voice of God is, "Not slothful in business." The voice of God is, Consecrate all life, — "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The hermit, the sloth, the world

despiser, — these all does reason condemn ; and these all does God repudiate.

Thus, are we all bound to this world. Our home is here, — here, by the law of gravity, and the will of God. The sphere of our activity is here. Railroads must be constructed ; cables must be swung under the Atlantic ; the eye of the telescope must be ground ; houses must be builded ; bread must be baked. Here, too, are many of the fountains of our joy : mother-love, wife-love, — these springs open up in this world ; these odorous flowers bloom here.

But beyond this necessary worldliness there reaches out another as guilty as this one is innocent ; as unwise as this one is wise. Not necessarily is the whole of man's being bounded by this world. He is endowed with thought which may run, which may fly beyond it. He is gifted with imagination which can picture the unseen ; with hope which can reach forward and rise upward to Heaven, and with faith by which he may draw from these far-off sources an inspiration for daily life.

But men make not use of these faculties, — say, rather, they first pervert and then destroy them. Are these faculties so many avenues out of which and along which the individual may run ? Then they are blocked up. Now, it is gold ; now, it is ambition ; now, it is pleasure, which by the man's own hand is rolled into these avenues which lie toward Heaven ; into these openings through which light may come. The man loves so much the honor which cometh from

man, that he forgets the honor which cometh from God. So, the White House sometimes has shut out the view of Heaven. Money does the same. Business of all kinds the same. Pleasure, too. So, the individual voluntarily walls himself in.

So, he becomes worldly in the Bible sense of this word; comes into that condition, when by not one of his divine faculties does he reach out beyond this world. When hope, wing-clipped and sensual, flutters up only to earthly goals; when imagination can only picture a finer house, a higher station, a larger estate, a wider fame; and when faith, — why, for her there is no use, and she falls down and dies within the soul. So, this world conquers. Blotting out duty; blotting out Heaven; blotting out God. The man acts as if this world were all; as if he had no concern or interest in a wider realm, in a nobler citizenship.

Now, my hearers, I fully believe that reason condemns such a life. I know that human experience does. But most severely of all is this life condemned by the wisdom which comes from numbering of our days. "He heapeth up riches," says the Bible, "and knoweth not who shall gather them." How these words burn their condemnation into the worldly life! How they wither it!

"And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?" asks the voice of inspiration, respecting the heir of the rich man. The emphasis, my hearers, is on the idea of heirship, on the words "he shall be." Yes; he cometh: the heir, — the heir of riches which are now being heaped up by another with such life-

absorbing eagerness; and as he comes he laughs at the one who is so laboriously preparing for him. He may be a wise man, this coming one, but this matters little. He may be a fool, — many heirs are, — but this scarcely makes the matter worse. The main fact is, that he is another; and the coming of the other speaks of the cessation of the first.

Such is the condemnation which the numbering of our days pours upon all the phases of the mere life of sense. It was this wisdom which took to itself a voice to speak unto the rich man, who was so anxious to know what to do with his fruits and goods; and this is what it said: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" And in these words for evermore does this wisdom speak.

It makes no difference what is the particular bent or passion of the worldly life. It may be to make money; it may be to get into places of honor; it may be the acquisition of knowledge. It matters not. Only so that the life of man is circumscribed by sense. Only so that in its noblest outreachings it is bounded by this world. So that the man does not love, or think upon, or care for, any thing which he cannot handle, or see, or analyze. Just so sure as this is the case, so surely does the wisdom prayed for in the text condemn, — condemn in these sharp words, "Thou fool, thou hast not numbered thy days."

But, once more, let me say that the wisdom which comes from the numbering of our days condemns the *irreligious or unchristian* life most severely of all.

Into this condemnation it gathers all its force, all its severity. What is an irreligious life? A life which is unprepared to die. Doth not the fact that our days may end at any time condemn such a life? Unpreparedness for an event which may be precipitated at any moment, — is not this unwisdom? Is not this folly? What is the irreligious life? The life whose guilt is still resting upon its own head. And yet, within any day, it may be summoned into the presence of yonder white and holy Throne. Is not this folly? Is it not madness? What is the irreligious life? The one which dares to ignore the bleeding Saviour on yonder Cross. And yet, at any moment, it may be swept forward into a realm of which the only heaven is this same despised Saviour's gift. Is not this unwisdom? Is not this folly? — folly unmatched in the realm of rational life? Is not this madness? — the wildest madness in the universe? What is the irreligious life? The life whose only portion is here; which has no home or hope beyond this world. And yet, with the next tick of the clock, it may be swept forward into the eternities, despoiled of its all.

Oh, what a condition for a rational being to live in, to be contented in! Unprepared to die, unforgiven, Christless, with no everlasting home; and the days passing, running, flying! Oh, brethren! oh, my hearers! pray, pray! pray the prayer of the text, "Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

You see, my hearers, how the matter of personal religion is forced upon you to-day. It is pressed upon

you by the plainest, broadest, simplest fact of your existence, — your *mortality*. And how shall you escape, how shall you justify yourself, if you turn away from, if you despise, the wisdom which is within your reach; so surely and easily within your reach? To number your days, — this will frighten you out of your irreligious life. This will save you. And tell me, if you can, how could God Almighty bring salvation nearer to you than this?

My hearers, the voice of God unto you to-day is simply this: that in all your life you shall have reference to the great facts and laws which condition your being. Prominent among them is the fact and law of your mortality. And I am sent of God this morning to beseech you that you allow this fact to exercise a controlling influence over your daily life. And will you not heed my message? Is not the voice of God here, the voice of reason as well? Doth not reason declare, doth not instinct teach, that your life here ought to be something different from what it might be if it was to have no end? That it ought daily to feel the shaping, inspiring, modifying influence of the great fact of your mortality? Turn then, I pray you, unto the numbering of your days, and unto the life-wisdom which comes from this numbering.

I see the gladiators of old step forth into the arena, and, as they do so, they bow before the assembled throng, with the words, "Morituri salutamus," — "We, who are about to die, salute you." So from this sanctuary do you step forth into the arena of life. And as the cares, the pleasures, the ambitions of time look

down upon you, as they beckon to you, be it yours to respond to them all, in the words of the old Roman: "I, who am about to die, salute you." Thus holding, so relating, your life, this world shall have no power to corrupt it; and, at last, death shall have no power to terrify its spirit, or to shrink its dimensions.

XVI.

THE TRUE SUCCESSION.

"THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH DOTH REST ON ELISHA." — 2 Kings, ii. 15.

THE succession of Elisha was one marked by the sharpest and boldest contrasts.

First. *In his origin.*

Elijah came from the mountainous country of Gilead. He was the wild man of the mountains. Elisha was called from the peaceful scenes of agricultural life. Elijah found him at the plough, and there anointed him. There is a vast difference between a mountaineer and a farmer of the plains, between the Highlander of Scotland and the Lowlander. And all this difference was there between Elijah and Elisha. Yet were they both called to the same office, one from the mountains, the other from the plough ; yet was Elisha the successor of Elijah.

A second point of contrast. *The appearance of the men.*

This was totally unlike. Elijah wore his hair long, so that he was called the hairy man, and this, with his sheepskin mantle thrown around him, and what we can well believe to have been the singular and striking features of his face, gave to him an ap-

pearance altogether remarkable and unique. There was indeed no one in the kingdom like him. When Ahab's minister met him, he said at once, "This is Elijah." He knew that no one else could make up such a picture.

But there was no such peculiarity in Elisha's appearance. He looked like other men. The boys called out after him, "Bald-head, bald-head," because he wore not his hair long, like the wild, fierce, destructive Gileadite. Yet was this same ordinary looking man the successor of the wild and extraordinary one. So, centuries later, came One, "eating and drinking," looking like, acting like, living like the men around Him, albeit He was the successor of the prophet who lived in the wilderness, clad in shaggy raiment, eating locusts and preaching wrath. Learn, then, that succession does not consist in dress; that a great man's successors are those who carry forward his work, not those who ape his appearance. The true succession is one of character, and not one of clothes.

A third point of contrast. *In their manner of life.*

The first that we see of Elijah is, when he darts into the presence of Ahab from the wild scenes of his native Gilead. And then, like a flash, he is gone again. And again we see him living by the brook Cherith, away from the homes of men, and fed by the ravens. Next we behold him lying under a juniper-tree, out of Israel, out of Judah, away down in the desert, scores of miles away from any place which

he could call home. Then again we look, and the wild strange man, forty days deeper in the desert, is lying in a mountain cave. So Elijah lived. He was a regular Bedouin, scorning the habitations of men.

But Elisha lived as any man might live who had given up farming for a professional calling. He dwelt in towns and cities. He mixed with men. He preferred a house to a cave, and a bed to the hard cold ground. So the greatest of all the prophets was accustomed to enjoy the hospitality of his friends. Bethany furnished Him a favorite resort. There, with the two sisters and their brother, Jesus often stopped, resting from His public labors in the quiet of a comfortable home. But His forerunner, in his camel's hair, in the wilderness preached by day, and in the wilderness slept by night. So I have seen it on the frontier. The son deserts the rude cabin of his father, building for himself a comfortable house. So the necessity of the day shapes the lives of men. So the times change, and men, who are greater than their clothes or their houses, change with them.

So it should be always in the sphere of religion. There are other and better ways of succeeding to our Puritan forefathers than by singing Rouse's version, adopting the nasal tone, sitting in cold meeting-houses, and listening to forty-headed sermons. But how slow some good people are to distinguish between religion and its accidental dress! They render themselves, and, what is much worse, all around them uncomfortable, by fighting for the continuance of sameness in the outward and unessential; forgetting

that the world moves, forgetting also that God is quite willing to clothe the soul in new garments, to put the spirit of an Elijah into the body of an Elisha. And, my hearers, if God is willing so to do, if He is willing to dispense with the long hair and sheepskin mantle and Arab life of His Elijah, if He says, "These are not my prophet, only his accidental dress;" why should not we be willing to say the same?

One other contrast, I name, between the two prophets. A contrast growing out of *the particular form of their work* for God. Elijah's was *destruction;* Elisha's was *construction.* The first act of Elijah was to smite the land with a terrible curse. The first act of Elisha was to bless Jericho with the gift of good water. So throughout their lives, — one pulled down, the other built up. And yet, both were doing the same great work. God called both, and with equal fidelity they discharged their duty, — fulfilled their mission.

My hearers, let us stop here to note and learn the great lessons taught by the contrasts which I have mentioned. The first is this: *the little stress which the Divine Arrayer and Architect places upon external sameness.* We discover this divine indifference far below the human level, and in the lowest spheres of life. The two blades of grass which grow at your feet are not exactly alike. They have their generic likeness, but they also have their points of difference. So with the roses. Each has its own style, its own peculiar blush. So with the noble pines which stand

high up upon nature's battlements waving their majestic plumes. Each one of them stands up an individual giant, itself in girth, itself in height, itself in beauty.

And where in nature to-day, will you find two waterfalls the exact duplicate of each other? Minnehaha, and Genesee, and Niagara, are one to-day in their mighty music; but their music is harmony, not unison. So with the music of the spheres. There is not a planet which the eye of the astronomer does not recognize at once. He looks up and says, "There is Mars with his fiery glow. And there is Venus with her pure silver light. And yonder, that is Saturn with his girdle of moons." So everywhere throughout nature, the same soul looks out upon us with different eyes, speaks to us in a different tone, tells upon us with a peculiar power. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars." Type, all this, of the Divine intention and method in the sphere of rational life. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."

Men come forth from the Divine Hand, as unique, as peculiar, as are the roses or the planets. Each has his own beauty; each has his own orbit; each bears the stamp of the day in which he lives. Take an old Roman coin, and compare it with one which comes forth cleanly cut from our own mint. What a difference between them! Yet both are precious metal, both are coin. So is it with the man whom God forms and equips for His work. He lays stress only upon the

soul, only upon the spirit of a man. When He needs a man to thunder, to tear down, He says, "Let him be Elijah; let him be John Baptist; let him be Luther the monk." And then, right by the very side of these, He raises up His Elisha, His Melancthon, His Christ. And both classes are accepted of Him.

My hearers, let us learn from this how to hold men, to take God's valuation. There is no other life in this world so frequently misunderstood, so wrongly judged and so falsely valued, as the human life. We know how to judge a tree. "It is known by its fruits." So we know how to value a horse. Not so surely, not so easily, do we measure men. In their case, we are continually prone to lay too much stress upon the external. So the Athenians did, and gave their greatest and wisest soul hemlock to drink. So the Jews did, and crucified their Christ. And how many have written of Cromwell and his followers, who weighed them in the scale with their nasal twang, their uncouth patronymics, and their most unpoetical psalms. Just as though these things were any thing more than the rough outer garments of the men. And this style of judging men prevails even now. A man stands up, goes forth preaching Christ, casting out devils, doing good, and he is condemned, ostracized, "because he followeth not with us." Too often Christians will not own Elisha, unless he wears the long hair of Elijah. Just as if hair made the man, constituted Apostolic succession.

Brethren, we must come to hold men, men who

are the noblest work of God, in a more liberal spirit, and judge them by a nobler standard. Does Elisha possess the spirit, is he doing the work, of Elijah? This is all that you may ask, all that you need to know. Remember that God's servants, that God's workmen, are not all cut after the same pattern, not all stretched upon the same theological form, not all dressed in one unvarying style. They come forth, not as the copper nails from the government machine, each just so long, each just so wide, and with U. S. stamped on the head of each of them. They rise not up before the world as so many puppets, all the same height, all opening their voices on the same note, all speaking the same words. No; but they come forth men, come forth from the presence of that God who loves to throw out an infinite variety of individual types, and come, each of them, with a special message for this great world. Let them speak their own words, let them work in their own way, only so that they advance the great cause, only so that they save men. Let them be judged by their fruits.

Brethren, every thing here must be pardoned to the possession and manifestation of the true life. The man who possesses the Spirit of Christ, who is doing the work of Christ, he it is who is a Christian, he it is who is accepted of God, and who ought to be owned of men. God, who with his own hand, incases the human soul in various forms, clothes it in different garbs, forbids us to lay stress upon external sameness. He would have the world look upon men as we look upon watches. In the factories where these

are made, they have a variety of works, some good, some poor; and they have also an assortment of cases, both cheap and dear, into which these works can be put. You can buy first-class works, and have them put into a cheap or into a dear case, as you please. The case neither adds to nor detracts from the value of the mechanism within it. This will run as well within silver as within gold.

So God has an infinite variety of men and of human envelopes for them. Sometimes He puts His chosen one into a casing of poverty, sometimes of wealth. Now He puts him in the fierce son of the mountains, and now again in the husbandman. Now the divine works keep time to the music of the heavenly life within an Elijah, and now within an Elisha. But in all cases the mechanism within, and not the envelope, not the casing, is the chief thing. The "Spirit which rests upon" a man, this it is which determines whether the man is the successor of the prophet whom God has taken, or is a son of Belial. The spirit within and the fruit without, if these are good, it doesn't much matter about the hair or the cut of the clothes.

But I cannot dwell. Judge others, judge yourselves, by that which is essential. "You have been in the church so many years." Well, what of it? Your manhood may have been drying up all this while. "You never go to any place of amusement." This may be because you have no taste for this, or because you think too much of your money. "You love, as your daily food, the doctrines of your church."

Perhaps you do not understand them, and dishonor God every time you say "Amen" to one of your favorites. But, "You have the Spirit of Christ, you are doing Christ's work." Ah! there is no discount here. All this is pure gold. All this is so much of heaven already possessed. All this is God's seal of acceptance upon you. By these signs are you proven a true successor of the prophets who have been taken.

Let us learn, secondly, from our subject, *the variety and flexibility of means and methods allowed in the kingdom of God.* We have all met with those who do little but mourn over the departures which have been made from the good old ways, and from the practice of the Fathers. So it is not difficult to imagine, that, if these same persons had lived in Elisha's time, they would have complained that he did not live in caves and wear long hair and curse as Elijah did. "Alas, alas," they would have said, "that it should ever come to this, that a prophet of God should live in a comfortable house, and go about healing fountains and blessing men! And see, if he is not actually carrying about the mantle of Elijah! What a mockery! To what a pass have we come!"

Too many there are who fail to distinguish between the end to be gained, and the means employed. The end was the same under both Elijah and Elisha, to save Israel from idolatry, to rescue the ten tribes from utter heathenism. This, the end aimed at through both lives, changed not; not for a moment was it lost sight of. But the means employed, the

method of advance, of attack, these might change, — actually were changed. The object of the physician is to save the life of the sick man. So he watches the patient, noting every symptom, standing ready to change the medicine, so soon as there is a change in his condition. To-day, it is cordials freely, yesterday it was sedatives only. Why? Because the turning-point has been reached, the fever has ceased, and the life is sweeping down to the brink of the grave.

From the necessity of the case, great flexibility and variety of method must be, likewise, allowed to those who work for God. Because the generations change, knowledge increases, the line of battle shifts. He would be little better than a fool who should now preach to men in the style of the great divines of two centuries ago. As well might the soldier of to-day take the battle-axe, and go forth to the battle-field where the minie whistles, and the shell shrieks, and the cannon-ball jumps miles at the touch of powder. And then as to Christian activity. Good men are afraid of many of its new forms. They shake their heads, as much as to question whether a soul, reached by the Gospel through the instrumentality of a lay-man, is after all much advantaged. They do not know, they say, about the preaching of the Gospel in this irregular way. Oh, brethren, this is too bad! Shall Christ alone have none of the benefits of this world's progress? Shall every other industry profit from it, save the industry of the Church?

Why, out yonder on the Western fields, the farmer harvests in one day with his reaping machine as much

grain as he could do in a whole month with the old sickle. And he is not sorry; not sorry that he can cultivate five hundred acres instead of five. So, in these latter days it seems to me, that, through the diversity of operations, the reaping power of the Gospel is multiplied a thousand-fold. And yet men shake their heads. "This irregular preaching of the Gospel," they exclaim. "Are we not going a little too fast? After all, hadn't we better leave the world harvest to the priests and their orthodox sickles?"

I know of clergymen who act as though their little church door, underneath their Gothic roof and stately steeple, was the very gate of heaven. And who, removed from the world of to-day by the chasm of at least three hundred years, stand up as mediæval manikins with a ghostly grace to help, through this nicely carved little door, into a little nicely carved ecclesiastical and exclusive heaven beyond. Such is the *priest* of to-day, and with what words further shall I describe him? He is neither man nor woman, wearing the dress of the one and filling the office of the other. He is a mediæval ghost, centuries out of date, and he knows church, — *he knows church.* In preference to this narrow ecclesiasticism, presided over by such a spirit, welcome, I say, Temperance Societies; welcome, Sunday-schools; welcome Young Men's Christian Associations; welcome, lay Evangelists; welcome, any agency or any organization that embodies the Spirit of Christ, that is in sympathy with man, that is serving a present need in a present world.

The field is the world, and it waves white for the

harvest. Away with your little sickles of a by-gone day. Call the laborers; call the laborers. Let them come by thousands and tens of thousands. Summon the organizations. Let them spring up by scores under the inspiration of the manifold wisdom of the ever-present Spirit. Let *isms* die only, so that *principles* live. Let *methods* change, while the *end* is never lost sight of. A world for Christ. Let the word be, "Forward, advance the whole line." And let those stay behind whose priestly garments impede their progress, who love dead forms better than living men.

In the third place, let us learn from the contrasts presented in the succession of Elisha, *that God's great work in this world always proceeds from that which is negative to that which is positive;* from conversion to edification, from destruction to construction.

In the Divine economy, threatening, correction, repression, destruction, mark only the first stage, the incipiency of the work. They are only ordered for the sake of an end outside of and beyond themselves. Look at Elijah. Look at John Baptist. Look at Luther. Their great work was demolition. They builded little. The first act of Elijah was to sweep the kingdom with the besom of a withering curse. And like a very fiery pillar the Baptist stood up in the wilderness, and thundered wrath, wrath, wrath to come. But there was no finality about their work. Indeed, it was only ordered as the necessary antecedent, as the preparation, for the true work which was

to follow. Elijah cleared away the rubbish, and Elisha came forth to build. The Baptist cut the path for a greater than he. So is it always under God. He never sets before Him negation as an end, or repression or destruction. He accepts these only as the first stage, only as a preparation for something positive in the way of truth and righteousness and life.

So, if you go out into the woods on our frontier, you will see men cutting down the forest trees, and rolling them together in a pile for burning. So much waste, so much loss, it seems. But wait and see. They stop not with this work of destruction. At once it is followed with edification, and the house arises, and the harvest waves in the clearing thus savagely made. Death has been allowed only to make way for a nobler life. So, God scourges a nation with war, not that the work may stop with this, but that, in the wound-furrows which He has thus made, He may sow the seed of a new life and of nobler potencies. Ever His work moves forward to that which is positive, — to upbuilding, to regeneration, to salvation.

And this, the Divine method, we should follow. First : *In our working for others.* We must lead the penitent forward into the life of positive righteousness, or we never form the "new man." A man is like a vessel. He is formed to contain, and will surely be filled either with the good or with the bad. You cannot count on a vacuum in human nature ; and, if you could, the world would get no benefit from it, and

God would abhor it. You have not therefore saved a man, if you have but emptied him of that which is bad. You must now see that he is filled with the good. Threatenings, visions of coming wrath, the awful concussions of terrible truth, — these are only to prepare the way for the positive precepts of God; for the activities, the duties, the joys, the beauties of the new life.

The drunkard is not saved when he gives up his cups. The impure man is not delivered by the simple repression of his vileness. The one must be engaged in the responsibilities and duties of a temperate life; the other held fast to purity by the associations, by the denials, by the positive fulness of a life of chastity. Evil must be overcome of good, or like the scotched snake it will soon live again. The place of the unclean spirit must be filled, or else he soon will return, and with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself.

In the second place, *this truth has also application to our own religious life.* Christianity, piety, are more than negation and our religion, if it is long to satisfy us, must have its positive side. Are you saying, "Now that I have professed Christ, I will not do so and so?" I ask you, Are you thinking of what you will do? Having thrown out the old furniture, are you now engaged in refurnishing, or is it your intention to allow the room to remain bare and cold, desolate and uninviting? So will you entertain your Divine Guest? "You are not going to work on Sunday now," you say. What! not for Christ? Are

you satisfied with the purpose simply not to do that which is wicked? Let me tell you, if this be your idea, your religion will not please or satisfy you long; and it ought not.

Inanity is well-nigh as bad as foulness, and it would be to the shame of your manhood and your Saviour if you stopped with it. I entreat you set before you some noble ends. Take some aims worthy of a new life. Begin on something positive in the way of goodness. In the family, in the Church, and in the world, make your present self at least as full, as forceful, as was your old self. Don't simply rub yourself of your vileness, offering yourself to your Saviour as bare as a scraped rock. Rest not with cutting down the weeds and briers, but plant fruit and flowers in their stead. Put on that which is beautiful. If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. By God's grace make a full man of your Christian self.

I name one other lesson from this succession contrast, — *the proper use of the great and good men who have gone before us.* This is to take up their work, and to carry it forward; not, perhaps, just as they did, but as the Divine Providence intimates, and as we are best fitted to do it. Shall you read the memoir of a Payson or Brainerd, and then begin to record your thoughts in a diary as they did theirs? What if you have no thoughts worth writing down? Will you fast as they did? What if it gives you the dyspepsia? What if your body is not fitted for such a regimen? I tell you, my hearers, there is scarcely a worse use to

which we put great men than slavishly to copy them. We shall only learn their little unessential habits perfectly. The young men of Byron's day got the cut of his collar, but not the flow of his grand periods. Some, in our day, have succeeded in copying Carlyle's barbarous style, but without his fulness of thought.

So in religion. The saints have been aped in their dress by those who have had none of their spirit, and who carried not forward their work. Elisha shows us how to imitate the good. It was not by the mantle, which he never used ; or by the long hair, which he never wore ; or by the fulmination of curses, which he never uttered ; or by living in caves of the mountains, which he never did : but by the possession of a double portion of Elijah's spirit it was, that Elisha became and was declared to be the true successor of the great prophet who went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And when modern High-Churchism shall so illustrate her boasted succession, when she shall be able to grant unto the world the "signs of an Apostle" in like manner with Elisha, there will be many of the now incredulous who will be found ready to bow assent unto her bold and much-derided claim.

I make two inferences. First: *the many-sided, far-reaching, most wonderful fruitage of the Divine Spirit in human nature.* One from the mountains of Gilead, and one from the plough, were called two of the greatest names of Old Testament history, — names which live to-day, long after oblivion has rotted the memory of kings and of statesmen, of warrior and of

priest. "A gratuitous education gave to the world Claudius Buchanan, crowns for whose head are daily going up from India's millions. Carey went from a shoemaker's bench to the same land, and to this day thousands are reading the thoughts of God in the new and strange words in which he set them. Bunyan, the tinker, held aloft a lamp which has lighted millions of pilgrims unto their Father's house." And from their fishing smacks on Lake Gennesaret were called the men who were to fish for the world, and catch it too. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

Secondly: *the safety of the truth and kingdom of God through this many-sided, far-reaching, and qualifying power of the Divine Spirit.* Elijah is whirled up to heaven, but behold his mantle fluttering down upon Elisha. The Lord God of Elijah leaves not the world with Elijah. He remains, providing a successor for the prophet whom He has taken. And so it shall ever be. The chariots and horsemen of Israel shall not fail. Good men, great men, coming forth one after another from the presence of the creating God, shall not fail until the work is done, until the great consummation is reached, and victory sounds out along the whole line of the mighty host, which is marching forward under the banner of the cross.

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